**Growing in Grace**

*2 Peter 3:18*

**Introduction**

1. **2 Peter 3:18** – we are commanded to grow in Christ.
2. The command to grow as Christians is understood as vitally important to our spiritual goal of salvation in heaven.
3. However, the command to grow is often looked at, whether overtly or otherwise, as a grudging obligation:
   1. It takes effort – **2 Timothy 2:15; Ecclesiastes 12:12**
   2. It take sacrifice **– Luke 10:41-42** (Martha choosing good part)
4. The description of Peter’s call to growth lends us a perspective which brings appreciation to the process, and the success of growth in God’s will – **2 Peter 3:18**
   1. Not just knowledge.
   2. GROW IN THE GRACE OF JESUS.
5. Grace is something the world looks at in a passive manner – I.E. GOD GIVES THE GRACE, BUT WE DO NOTHING.
   1. Such a thought is not biblical.
   2. Such a thought is dangerous.
6. The idea of growing in grace shows that, while it is God supplying the grace, we have an obligation to advance towards it, and in it. (This is joined by Peter with growth in knowledge – explained in the study.)
7. The knowledge that we are growing in God’s grace as we grow in God’s word and our conduct as Christians is a refreshing truth which brings a greater sense of value and appreciation for what God calls us to.
8. The Grace of God
9. Grace – *charis* – “(2) good-will, loving-kindness, favor” (Thayer)
10. His Disposition of Favor Toward Us
    1. *Charis* – “(2) a beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill” (BDAG)
    2. This is not as a reaction from God toward us due to any action on our part to curry His favor.
    3. This disposition of favor toward us is in direct relation to His eternal nature, and the recognition of our desperate need.
    4. He is the God of grace – **1 Peter 5:10**
       1. This noting the origin and source of grace – He is the author of grace, not because He created the idea, but because it is a part of His very nature.
       2. It is to this nature that David appealed for forgiveness – **Psalm 51:1-2**
          1. ***“lovingkindness”*** – *ḥeseḏ* – faithfulness, goodness, graciousness (HALOT)
          2. The word used by God in revealing Himself to Moses – **Exodus 34:6-7** ***(“goodness”)*** – especially expressed in forgiveness.
       3. It is eternal, as it is a part of God – **Psalm 103:17**
          1. The very notion that the Lord desires to express favor and goodwill toward sinful man is an eternal part of His nature.
          2. From before creation on to eternity it is a part of God’s undying character.
11. His Gift of Favor for Us
    1. *Charis* – “(3) practical application of goodwill, (a sign of) favor, gracious deed/gift, benefaction” (BDAG)
    2. The mere disposition, or attitude of favor is not of benefit unless it materializes into an efficacious gift or benefit.
       1. “I want what’s best for you” – truly means nothing if the one who said it can do nothing about it or can but is unwilling to do anything.
    3. Justification through Christ Jesus – **Romans 3:24-25**
       1. God has favor toward us in justification, but it is through the offering of His Son.
       2. Such is made possible through the gift of God’s Son, a manifestation of His grace.
    4. The gift of eternal life is through Jesus – **Romans 6:23**
    5. We don’t deserve this gift, which is why we refer to the grace of God as UNMERITED FAVOR – **Romans 4:4; 11:6**
    6. We access such by faith, and therefore stand in it – **Romans 5:1-2** – “through whom” – Jesus.
       1. A state of favor.
       2. Faith is produced by God’s word – **Romans 10:17**
       3. Why the gospel is connected with grace – **Acts 20:24; Galatians 1:6**
    7. The gift of Christ’s death is the practical application of God’s favor toward man, which allows man to stand in God’s favor as being justified.
    8. This gift is accessed by the gospel – ***“message of the cross” (1 Corinthians 1:18)*** – which further teaches us the life to which the application of Christ’s blood is to lead – **Titus 2:11-14** (especially **v. 14**)
       1. God’s grace in Christ was not to just free us from the consequences of our sin.
       2. It was to change us completely from who we were as the man of sin, to being a faithful child of God – **Romans 6:5-11** – it teaches us this, because we die as Christ did, and we live as He did – alive to God.
12. The Effect Produced by His Favor
    1. Charis – “(4) exceptional effect produced by generosity, favor.” (BDAG)
    2. The immediate effect (as it pertains to the grace of God bestowed in Christ’s sacrifice, and accessed by faith – **Romans 5:2**):
       1. Release from sin and death – **Romans 8:1-2**
       2. Justified – **Romans 5:1, 9**
       3. Reconciled – **Romans 5:10-11**
       4. Made a child of God – **Romans 8:15-17**
    3. This immediate effect is not all that the grace of God is meant for:
       1. Return to sin? – **Romans 6:1-2, 15**
       2. Such would be receiving grace in vain – **2 Corinthians 6:1**
          1. Treating Christ’s sacrifice with contempt – **Hebrews 10:26, 29**
    4. Such change from the immediate effect is just the beginning.
       1. **Acts 11:23** – Barnabas sent to Antioch, observed God’s grace, and urged them to continue in it.
       2. **Romans 8:29-28** – called, justified, glorified – conformed to image of Christ.
          1. This ultimate glorification is consummated in the resurrection.
          2. But it begins now – **1 John 3:2-3**
    5. Hence, the urge to GROW IN GRACE – **2 Peter 3:18**
       1. And knowledge – There are “a number of passages in which CHARIS (grace) is evidently to be understood in a very concrete sense. It is hardly to be differentiated from DYNAMIS (power) or from GNOSIS (knowledge) or DOXA (glory).” (BDAG)
       2. Dynamis (power) – **Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 1:5; Romans 10:17**
          1. Song – “His power can make you what you ought to be”
       3. Gnosis (knowledge) – **1 Corinthians 1:4-5; 2 Corinthians 8:7** (implies that knowledge is a “grace”)
       4. Doxa (glory) **– Romans 8:30** (“glorified” – verb form); **2 Corinthians 3:18** (apostolic ministry, but for us as well – **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**)
    6. God’s grace makes us who we are in Christ – **1 Corinthians 15:10** (speaking of apostolic ministry, but true for every Christian regarding their growth in Christ)
       1. Grace turned him from persecutor to a disciple.
       2. Not in vain – He grew in it, and labored.
       3. Not I, but the grace of God – i.e. what he became, and what he grew in, and what he accomplished was a product of God’s grace.
       4. **Galatians 2:20** – Christ was living in Him by the grace of God.
    7. Jesus grew in grace – **Luke 2:40, 49, 52**
    8. WE ARE TO GROW INTO WHAT GOD CALLED US TO BY GRACE, AND IT IS BY GROWING IN HIS GRACE THAT SUCH WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED – **Ephesians 4:7-13** – grace given according to the positions **(v. 11**) created for growth in knowledge to the maturity of Christ.
13. Growing in Grace
14. The Process of Growth in Grace (**2 Peter 1:2-4**)
    1. Growing in grace forms bookends to Peter’s second epistle – **2 Peter 1:2; 3:18**
       1. As the means of being prepared for the Day of the Lord – **2 Peter 3:14**
       2. As the preventative means against apostasy – **2 Peter 2:1-2; 3:17-18**
    2. **2 Peter 1:2** – more than just a formulary greeting
       1. Usually – **1 Peter 1:1** – well wishes of an increase in grace and peace.
       2. Here, adds the means by which this occurs, and the charge to advance in such – **(v. 5)**
    3. THE SUPPLY BY GOD – in knowledge:
       1. **(v. 2**) – multiplied to us in knowledge.
          1. Object – God and Jesus
       2. **(v. 3)** – the means of supplying grace and peace in knowledge elaborated.
          1. Given everything that pertains to ***“life and godliness:”***
             1. Life – the new life in Christ (Spiritual) – **Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15**
             2. Godliness – God-ward piety, life devoted to pleasing God, i.e. what such consists of – **2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Timothy 4:6-8** (words of faith, good doctrine)
          2. Through the knowledge of Him:
             1. Divine power has given…through the knowledge of Him.
             2. **Romans 1:16** – the power of the gospel.
       3. The call, and promise **(vv. 3b, 4):**
          1. Called by glory and virtue:
             1. Called – invitation by the gospel, BUT SUCH INCLUDES INCENTIVE, OR ATTRACTION.

**John 6:44** – drawn to Him.

By what?

* + - * 1. Glory – *doxa* – that of divinity

**John 1:14** – full of grace and truth.

* + - * 1. Virtue – *aretē* – moral excellence; “(1) uncommon character worthy of praise, excellence of character, exceptional civic virtue” (BDAG)

Without sin – **Hebrews 4:15**

Embodiment of God – **Colossians 2:9**

* + - 1. By which – the glory and virtue – gave promises:
         1. What are the promises?
         2. Connected to what they accomplish **(v. 4b)** – through them partake of the divine nature.
         3. The call of glory and virtue was TO glory and virtue:

**John 4:13-14** – living water to everlasting life

**John 6:51** – living bread to everlasting life

**John 14:2-6** – habitation prepared to be where He is with the Father

**John 17:22, 24** – to partake in His glory.

* + - 1. That through these – promises – partake of divine nature:
         1. Partake – *koinōnos* – share, participate, fellowship.
         2. Divine nature – not become Divine, but share in Him – **John 14:23; 1 John 3:2-3; 1 Peter 1:15-16**
         3. Through the promises – WHEN GOD MAKES A PROMISE IT IS CERTAIN TO BE RECEIVED IF WE MEET THE CONDITIONS OF IT – **Hebrews 6:13-15**
  1. THE APPROPRIATION BY US – in knowledge:
     1. This grace is multiplied to us, and we appropriate it after – **(v. 4c)** – having escaped corruption of sin:
        1. **(v. 2)** – grace and peace to be multiplied in the manner noted.
        2. **Romans 6:1** – grace does not abound in sin.
        3. **Romans 5:20-21** – grace reigns and abounds through righteousness.
           1. Righteousness of God – **Romans 1:17**
           2. As we adhere to the gospel we abound in grace, and grace in us, I.E. AS WE’RE FURTHER SEPARATE FROM THE LIFE LIVED BEFORE SUBJECT TO CORRUPTION.
        4. **2 Peter 1:8-9** – TO LACK THE GROWTH OF FRUITS PERTAINING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IS TO FORGET YOU WERE CLEANSED TO PARTAKE IN THE DIVINE NATURE **(v. 4).**
     2. God supplies us with an increase of grace in knowledge, BUT KNOWLEDGE ALWAYS HAS TWO PARTICIPANTS – THE GIVER OF IT, AND THE LEARNER OF IT.
     3. Knowledge – **2 Peter 3:18**
        1. *gnōsis* – the intellectual ascertaining and comprehension of facts. (Spiritual truth)
     4. Knowledge – **2 Peter 1:2, 3**
        1. *epignōsis* – “the prefix *epi* supplied – “Of *epignōsis*, as compared with *gnōsis*, it will be sufficient to say that *epi* must be regarded as intensive, giving to the compound word a greater strength than the simple possessed” (TRENCH)
        2. “expressing a fuller or a full ‘knowledge,’ a greater participation by the ‘knower’ in the object ‘known,’ thus more powerfully influencing him.” (VINE)
        3. Fuller knowledge through participation – NOT KNOWING JUST TO KNOW, BUT TO BE OR DO.
        4. **2 Peter 3:18** – grace paired with knowledge (*gnōsis*) GIVES AN INSPIRED DEFINITION OF *epignōsis*.
           1. Not simply growing in knowing the facts.
           2. But growing in becoming the facts.
           3. **Ephesians 4:13, 15** – maturing to the standard of Christ, growing up into Christ.
           4. **John 13:17** – blessed are you if you do them.
     5. SUCH SUPPLY OF THE INCREASE OF GRACE BY GOD IN KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IS ACTUALLY GAINED AS WE SUPPLY OUR DILIGENCE TO GROW IN SUCH KNOWLEDGE – **2 Peter 1:5-7**
        1. ASCENDING LIST – each one builds upon the other logically.
        2. End goal – LOVE – **1 John 4:8; Matthew 5:43-44, 48; 2 Peter 1:4** (DIVINE NATURE)

1. The Disposition of Growth in Grace
   1. This concept of growing in grace, and grace being multiplied to us gives us a greater appreciation for our privilege of participating in the things of God.
      1. Do all without complaining – **Philippians 3:14-16**
      2. Commandments not burdensome – **1 John 5:3**
   2. Why? Because it is known not to be a mere intellectual exercise, or a list we have to check off as is our responsibility.
   3. Rather, IT IS A GIFT OF GOD WE ARE BLESSED TO RECEIVE AND ENJOY THAT IS BEYOND ANYTHING ANYONE COULD OFFER.
   4. It is a blessing of God which allows us to secure our entrance into heaven – **2 Peter 1:10-11**
   5. For this reason, we receive the grace of God, and grow in it daily IN A SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING, OR GRACE:
      1. *Charis* – “(5) response to generosity or beneficence, thanks, gratitude” (BDAG)
      2. **Colossians 3:17** – giving thanks.
      3. **Hebrews 12:28** – having grace in serving God.
      4. **1 Timothy 1:12** – Paul thankful for being able to serve God as an apostle.
      5. **2 Corinthians 8:1-2, 7; 9:15** – thanksgiving to God for the grace of participating in the contribution for the needy saints.
      6. Etc.
   6. Thus, our call in the gospel to diligent discipleship in the service of God is not answered as a grudging obligation, but a blessed favor (grace) bestowed by God!

**Conclusion**

1. We should see the importance in spiritual growth in Christ, and we should see the value of such.
2. Growth as a Christian is not merely a debt we owe God for the payment of our sins in His Son’s death, BUT IT IS, IN CONJUCTION WITH THAT GIFT OF JESUS, HIS GRACE BESTOWED ON US.
3. Thank God for the privilege and blessing of being able to share in His divine nature through the knowledge of His Son, and thus secure our entrance into His eternal abode.
4. Following lessons will focus on the virtues, or graces enumerated by the Holy Spirit – **2 Peter 1:5-7** – in adding these to our faith, and growing in them, we are growing in grace as God multiplies it to us.