**Growing in Grace – Love**

*2 Peter 3:18; 1:5-7*

**Introduction**

1. **2 Peter 3:18** – we are commanded to grow in God’s grace.
2. **2 Peter 1:2** – He is seeking to multiply grace to us through the knowledge of Jesus.
	1. Ultimately, that we share in the divine nature **(v. 4).**
	2. This connected with the glory and virtue of Christ that we are called TO **(v. 3).**
	3. Attained through the knowledge of Christ which instructs us in the way of life and godliness **(v. 2).**
	4. Knowledge increased to the bearing of fruit when we supply diligence and add to our faith the list of virtues **(vv. 5-8).**
3. Virtue – the goal of moral excellence like Christ, and the courage to reach that goal.
4. Knowledge – the comprehension and grasp of God’s will for us necessary to achieve the goal of virtue.
5. Self-control – the decisive action to deny the inordinate desires of flesh and submit ourselves to God’s will, practicing the knowledge we have obtained.
6. Perseverance – the constancy of self-control, abiding faithfully under trials and tribulations.
7. Godliness – godward piety which seeks to do what is well pleasing to Him.
8. Brotherly kindness – the fraternal affection had for those born into the same spiritual family, for brothers and sisters in Christ.
9. To brotherly kindness we are to add love.
10. Love – agapē
11. love, i.e. affection or benevolence (STRONG)
	1. In context distinct from “affection” in brotherly love, thus, not necessarily affectionate love at its core.
12. the quality of warm regard for and interest in another (BDAG)
13. brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence (THAYER)
	1. In context must be distinct from “brotherly love” and the “affection” inhering in such.
14. “While the Hebrew and Greek words for "love" have various shades and intensities of meaning, they may be summed up in some such definition as this: Love, whether used of God or man, is an earnest and anxious desire for and an active and beneficent interest in the well-being of the one loved.” (ISBE)
15. ﻿“One can say that it means the interest in the other person that expresses itself in action designed to bring about good or benefit to the person.” (Clinton D. Hamilton, Truth Commentaries - 2 Peter and Jude)
16. ***“God is love” (1 John 4:8)*** – demonstrated in God’s manifestation of love.
	1. Gave His only Son for the world – **John 3:16**
		1. Jesus voluntarily complied out of love for the world – **1 John 3:16**
		2. Such shows no greater love – **John 15:13** – sacrificial in nature.
		3. This act was not due to our merit of it, but the nature of God which is love – **Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10**
	2. Love is sometimes “tough” – **Hebrews 12:6** – chastening.
		1. Yet, this demonstration of love is not harmful – **Romans 13:10**
		2. It is for the good of its object – **Hebrews 12:11** – always.
	3. Love is never limited by its object but is only limited at times because of the nature of its possessor. This is why God’s love is extended to all, and why His children’s love is to be of the same quality.
		1. ﻿“﻿Green perceptively comments, ‘In friendship ( philia ) the partners seek mutual solace; in sexual love ( eros ) mutual satisfaction. In both cases these feelings are aroused because of what the love is. With agapē it is the reverse. God’s agapē is evoked not by what we are, but by what he is. It has its origin in the agent, not in the object. It is not that we are lovable, but that He is love. This agapē might be defined as a deliberate desire for the highest good of the one loved, which shows itself in sacrificial action for that person’s good.’” (Clinton D. Hamilton, Truth Commentaries - 2 Peter and Jude)
17. Walking in Love **(Ephesians 5:1-2)**
18. The Preeminence of Love
	1. The greatest, and second greatest commands – **Matthew 22:37-40**
		1. This also shows the depth of this love.
		2. It involves all the commands of God – which then shows the importance of all God’s commands.
	2. Above all have love – **1 Peter 4:8**
	3. Bond of perfection – **Colossians 3:14**
		1. Heavenly focus – **(vv. 1-4)**
		2. Putting to death the deeds of the old man – **(vv. 5-11)**
		3. According to the new man after the image of Christ, put on these virtues among each other – **(vv. 12-13)**
		4. Love tops the list as the glue which binds all together, and makes one complete (*teleiotēs*) – **(v. 14)**
			1. “They [the virtues] imply love, but it is more than them all together. They lie within its circumference; wanting it, they fall to pieces and are nothing.” (Pulpit Commentary, Colossians 3:14)
			2. I.e. love is to be the motivation for these virtues. As they stand alone without love, they are meaningless.
			3. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** – no matter what “good” you may do, if it is not from love it is nothing.
		5. Such then leads to unity within the body – **(v. 15)**
	4. Love tops the ascending list of our context **– 2 Peter 1:7**
		1. Goal – **(vv. 2, 4)** – grace of participating in the divine nature extended through knowledge (*epignōsis*) of Jesus.
		2. Such knowledge is fruitful in the adding of these virtues – **(v. 8)**
		3. First virtue is – **(v. 5)** – virtue, the goal of moral excellence (i.e. like God).
		4. Last virtue is – **(v. 7)** – love, as ***“God is love” (1 John 4:8)*** – hence, partaking in the divine nature.
	5. Love is the more excellent way – **1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:13**
19. Love:
	1. For God
		1. **Matthew 22:37, 40** – love God, all the Law and the Prophets.
			1. **John 14:15** – love Christ by keeping His commandments.
			2. Bond of perfection – i.e. the keeping of the commandments is a manifestation of such love, i.e. such springs from love and is demonstrated by love.
			3. Which means an empty keeping of the commandments is not pleasing to God.
			4. **1 Corinthians 16:14** – all is to be done with love. (Context of relationships between brethren, but certainly before God as well.)
		2. **1 John 5:3** – not burdensome, but out of love.
		3. Our obedience to God needs to grow from a mere sense of duty, to an active goodwill toward the One who loves us so much.
	2. For God’s People
		1. Love for God requires love for God’s people:
			1. **1 John 4:7-8, 11** – love each other because God loves us.
			2. **1 John 4:20-21** – cannot love God while not loving brethren.
			3. **1 John 5:1-3** – we are to love God, but also love anyone who, like us, was born of God.
			4. **1 Peter 1:22-23** – our obedience to the gospel was UNTO a brotherly affection, which prompts in us the active goodwill toward those brethren (*agapaō*).
		2. Our discipleship is intimately connected with, and shown by our love for fellow disciples – **John 13:34**
		3. Not simply lip service, but deed – **1 John 3:16-18**
			1. Starts with our obedience to God – **1 John 5:2** – because those commands will include such responsibilities.
			2. In this way love will cover a multitude of sins – **1 Peter 4:8** – because our greatest concern for our brethren is their soul.
	3. For All People
		1. God’s love for us was when we were His enemies – **Romans 5:6, 8, 10**
		2. God calls us to such love. I.e. not simply to love the lovable, and those who love us, but all men, even enemies.
		3. We are called to perfection in love as God – **Matthew 5:43-48**
			1. This is accomplished by those who come to acknowledge the value of a human soul.
			2. We can know that value in knowing that God sent Jesus for all – **John 3:16**
20. Growing in Love
21. Know What God Says of Love
	1. We do not get to define what love is. Since God is love **(1 John 4:8**), we learn to love from Him.
	2. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** – A description of how love acts. (A choice that can be made in every circumstance.)
		1. Suffers long – patient, not short-tempered
		2. Kind – in dealings with others, not harsh
		3. Does not envy – rather is happy for the success of others
		4. Does not parade itself – is not boastful
		5. Is not puffed up – not arrogant, but humble
		6. Does not behave rudely – is considerate and respectful
		7. Does not seek its own – is not selfish, but selfless.
		8. Is not provoked – is not negatively affected by mistreatment of others.
		9. Thinks no evil – takes no account of evil, i.e. to hold it against others in the future. Does not dwell on offenses suffered leading to bitterness.
		10. Rejoices not in iniquity, but in truth – finds no positive in sin, with self or others, but delights in the things of God.
		11. Bears all things – i.e. bear up under any trial, tribulation, adversity.
		12. Believes all things – not gullible but believes the best in men.
		13. Hopes all things – is optimistic and hopes for the best in others.
		14. Endures all things – it perseveres through negative circumstances.
22. Imitate God (**Ephesians 5:1-2**)

**Conclusion**

1. We should be giving all diligence to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. (**2 Peter 3:18)**
2. This knowledge is an active, participant knowledge that will add all these virtues to our faith (**2 Peter 1:5-7**).
3. In doing so, we will be partakers of the divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**).
4. In doing so, we will be looking forward to heaven, and will secure an entrance (**2 Peter 1:9-11**).
5. Above all, we need to be people of love.