

“Grow Christian grow” (2)

The last time we were together we saw that Peter reminded us of four blessings which are very precious for the Christian. He also reminded us in **2 Peter 1:2** that grace and peace is multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. And in **2 Peter 1:3** he reminded us that all things that pertain to life and godliness are given through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. We also mentioned Peter’s final words of encouragement to finish his letter, in **2 Peter 3:18** where he challenges us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But before we get into our text today let me share with you a story about a man a man who got a job as an usher at a picture house; he was walking up the aisle before the film was about to start, when he came across a man lying over 4 seats in the back row, the usher went over to the man and said, “Sir, you need to sit up and only take one seat” But the man just moaned, so the usher said, “Excuse me sir, you really need to sit up and if you don’t, I will get the manager.” But the man still didn’t move, he just lay there and moaned.

So the usher got the manager, and the manager said, “Excuse me sir, would you please get up and only use one seat, we need these seats for paying customers.” But still, the man didn’t move. So the manager said, “OK, if you don’t move I am going to phone for the Police,” but the man still didn’t move. So the manager got the police and the policeman said, “Sir, what is your name”? And the man replied, “Tommy,” the policeman said, “and where do you come from Tommy?” the man said, “the balcony”.

And the moral of the story is, if people don’t move it’s probably because there is something wrong. Or let me put it this way, if Christians don’t grow there is definitely something wrong. Have you ever wondered what it means to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Can we as Christians be absolutely certain that we are growing in this knowledge? Why is it so important for Peter to urge his readers and us today to grow in this knowledge?

Well thankfully Peter is going to give us the answers to those questions today. And the first thing he is going to tell us is that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves the development of eight graces. **2 Peter 1:5-7** “Yes, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence; and in moral excellence, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control patience; and in patience godliness; and in godliness brotherly affection; and in brotherly affection, love.”

Peter mentions faith, moral excellence or virtue as some translations have it. He mentions knowledge, self-control and patience or perseverance as some translations have it. He mentions godliness, brotherly affection and love. Now look at what he says in **2 Peter 1:8** “For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Peter says we need to abound in these eight graces if we want to continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Loved ones, Peter is talking about something which is more than simply increasing our intellectual knowledge of Jesus Christ. He is talking about growing in a full and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

There was a newspaper article about a famous preacher a few years ago. And in the article they likened him to some of the apostles which I guess would be a huge compliment for some, but not for this preacher and so he wrote to the newspaper and said, "I do not want to be like a Paul or any mere man. I want to be like Christ, I want to follow Him only, copy His teachings, drink in His Spirit, and place my feet in His footprints. Oh, to be more like Christ!"

You see loved ones Peter doesn’t want us just to know about Jesus, he wants us to look like Jesus, he wants us to sound like Jesus, he wants us to speak like Jesus, he wants us to think like Jesus. If you want to be like Jesus, have faith like Jesus had. Have the virtue like Jesus had. Have the knowledge that Jesus had. Have the self-control like Jesus had. Have the patience like Jesus had. Have the godliness, brotherly affection and love like Jesus had.

In other words these will help you be Christ-like. Because I know some people who have a lot of knowledge of the Bible but their lives are far from reflecting that knowledge. They can name all the books of the Bible and be able to quote book chapter and verse from each of those books. But that knowledge means nothing if it isn’t reflected in your life.

You see the more we grow in these graces as Christians, the more we will really know Jesus because Jesus Christ is the perfect personification of these graces. Now we're only a few verses into **2 Peter** and he has used the word **knowledge 5 times** already. He uses the word **14 times** throughout his second letter. The word **knowledge** is the Greek word **epignosis** which means to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, to know well.

And loved ones Peter says this knowledge can only come about when we demonstrate these eight graces in our lives. And please don't think this is simply a case of getting up in the morning and thinking, 'ok **I need to work on my knowledge today or I'm going to work on my faith today**'. Peter says in **2 Peter 1:5** "For this very reason, make every effort to add." For us to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ we need to understand that all these eight graces need to be working together.

Did you know that some of the most powerful singing can be heard within the churches of Christ? As you know we don't use instruments expect the instrument which God has commanded us to use which is our voices. And when Acapella music is in full force, it's very powerful and heartfelt singing.

I remember last year a few of men went to Wembley's anniversary meeting and we were blessed to be in the presence of the Lancaster family who have their own Acapella group. I mean the singing was just so powerful as everyone done their part. We had people singing their individual parts whether it alto or soprano, tenors or basses. And the whole singing experience was taken to another level from what we usually do every Lord's Day.

Now we can sing and do our best but sometimes our singing isn't that great but when everyone begins to sing their individual parts of a song, it's beautiful and powerful. Look again at **1 Peter 1:5-7** "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love."

What Peter is saying here, when he says 'and to', he saying that when each grace is working in harmony with the others this will produce the overall effect. He saying that each grace is to blend with and make perfect the grace that goes before it.

Let me show you what I mean, Peter says, to knowledge add self-control. What he is saying is that the grace of self-control enables us to apply properly the knowledge we have. When he says to self-control add perseverance, he saying self-control in turn needs the quality of perseverance to be consistent day after day. In other words we can't just work on our brotherly affection one day and then work on our love the next. Each grace must be developed in conjunction with each other. And make no mistake about it loved ones this takes effort on our part.

Peter says in **2 Peter 1:5** "Yes, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence; and in moral excellence, knowledge." And he also says in **2 Peter 1:10** "Therefore, brothers, be more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never stumble."

He uses the word diligence which means we need to have a zeal about growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We need to earnestly strive to grow. Yes we're given the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism and one of His roles is to help us become more Christ-like but growing is not going to happen on its own. You have to work with the Spirit to help you grow. Because if we don't put any effort into our growing than we can't grow into the fully mature Christian which God wants us to become.

There was a woman who had been a school teacher for 25 years. When she heard about a job that would mean a promotion, she applied for the position. However, someone who had been teaching for only one year was hired instead. She went to the principal and asked why. The principal responded, "I'm sorry, but you haven't had 25 years of experience as you claim; you've had only one year's experience 25 times." During that whole time the teacher had not improved.

There are many Christians today who suffer from 'Peter Pan syndrome', you know the little boy who said, "I don't want to grow up". There are many Christians who have been Christians for many years but they haven't grown.

There are many Christians today, like the little boy who had his first night in a big bed, after 3 years in a cot, and he got in. In the middle of the night his mum and dad heard him cry, and when they went through, the little boy was

lying on the floor, rubbing his head, and his parents said, “What happened”? The little boy said, “I guess I stayed to close to where I got in”.

And what Peter is telling us loved ones is that unless we continue to grow, we are simply repeating the first year of our Christian lives over and over again; we’ve stayed too close to where we got in. And just in case you’re wondering if all that effort is worth it, Peter goes on to give us three reasons as to why we should continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:9 “For he who lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.” I used to work with the elderly many years ago and I spent a few years working with those who had dementia which is a horrible disease. Now what was interesting was that they could recall with detail events which happened years ago but try and ask them what they did yesterday and they couldn’t tell you.

Let me ask you, **have you ever stopped to think about something, and then forgot to start again?** You see we all became Christians because we knew we had a sin problem which needed to be dealt with and so we come to the waters of baptism to have those sins forgiven. **But what are we supposed to do after that? As Christians what are we supposed to do next?**

We’re supposed to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ loved ones. And Peter is telling his readers and us this morning that unless we grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ and so become more Christ-like we could end up with spiritual amnesia. Peter says if you’re not growing, you’re blind and short-sighted.

What is a Christian’s ultimate reason for being a Christian? Is it just to go to church? Is it just to get together with other Christians who believe the same thing? Is it to ensure that we don’t lose our salvation? What is God’s purpose for you being a Christian today?

Paul tells us first of all in **Romans 8:29** “For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Paul says the goal and ultimate aim for you being a Christian is to become like Jesus Christ Himself. Paul also tell us over in **Colossians 3:9-11** “Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old nature with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new nature, which is being renewed in full knowledge, consistent with the image of the one who created it. In him there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free person. Instead, the Messiah is all and in all”.

Paul says the reason you’re a Christian is to demonstrate in your life that you have changed and are changing daily into the likeness of Jesus Christ Himself. Which is exactly what Peter means when he says we need to grow in the knowledge of Christ. When we don’t grow, we forget, we forget why we were redeemed by the blood of Christ in the first place.

Yes we’re Christians because we want our sins forgiven but we should be striving to present ourselves to God and become what He wants us to become, which is the likeness of His Son Jesus. So not only will we end up with spiritual amnesia if we don’t grow in the knowledge of Christ. We could end up losing our salvation if we don’t grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Peter says in **2 Peter 1:10** “So then, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election certain, for if you keep on doing this you will never fail.” Now please don’t misunderstand what Peter is saying here. He is not saying that Christians will never fail in terms of sinning because **1 John 1:8-10** tells us we will sin and do sin. The word **fail** or **stumble** as some translations has it means to fall into misery, or loss of salvation.

And what Peter is saying is that if we are continuing to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, the less chance there will be of us falling from grace and losing our salvation. And for us to do that we need to be diligent, we need to be earnestly trying to grow. And so the effort we make to grow in our knowledge of Jesus loved ones will be worth it.

When we’re growing we don’t forget, when we’re growing we won’t lose our salvation. After all that’s where we’re trying to get to **isn’t it?** Like Peter told us in **1 Peter**, we’re strangers travelling through a strange land until we get to our real home which is in heaven.

And like Peter again reminds us of next in 2 Peter 1:11 “For in this way you will be generously granted entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Messiah.” Peter says grow Christian grow, heaven awaits your arrival.

Can you imagine what heaven is going to be like? A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed; "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be!"

Loved ones when we possess those eight graces, when we grow in them and develop them into our lives, we will be able to live victoriously in this life and with great joy look forward to what lies ahead. And then we too can join Paul and understand his words in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 “I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have completed the race. I have kept the faith. The victor’s crown of righteousness is now waiting for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on the day that he comes, and not only to me but also to all who eagerly wait for his appearing”.

Loved ones let me encourage you keep reading your Bibles. Let me encourage you to keep growing so that others will see Jesus in your lives. Let me encourage you to continue to grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Let me leave you with some words of a song. Years ago a woman called Amy Grant sung a song called “Fat Baby.” I think you’ll get the point after I’ve read the words.

I know a man, maybe you know him too, you never can tell, he might even be you,
He knelt at the altar and that was the end, he’s saved and that’s all that matters to him,
His spiritual tummy, it can’t take too much, one day a week, he gets his spiritual lunch.

On Sunday he puts on his spiritual best, and gives his language a spiritual rest,
He’s just a fat little baby, he wants his bottle and he doesn’t mean maybe,
He’s sampled solid food once or twice, but he says doctrine leaves him cold as ice.

He’s been baptised, sanctified, redeemed by the blood, but he says his daily devotions are down in the mud,
He knows the books of the Bible and John 3:16, he’s got the biggest King James you’ve ever seen.

I’ve always wondered if he’ll grow up some day, he’s mama’s boy, and he likes it that way,
If you happen to see him, tell him I said, he’ll never grow, if he never gets fed,
He’s just a fat little boy; He’s just a fat little boy.

Keep growing Christian, keep growing.