

Growing in Grace and Knowledge . . . a follow-up letter by Peter to reiterate what he has been telling them about growth and maturity, and to warn them about false teaching.

how to foster the growth; and what are the barriers: **2 Peter 3:1-2; 3:17-18** is the point . . . they need continual reminding and stirring for continual growth, in grace and knowledge

Of the same kind: “The gift of faith gives the same privileges to all, whether the most famous of apostles or the most obscure of believers; this faith is given by the grace and mercy of God, without any desert or merit of man; it brings with it equal privileges because of the absolute justice or righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Charles Erdman)

We cannot add to His work, but we must add to our faith . . . His finished work informs, inspires and empowers our work.

Critical Growth Factors: the source, the substance, and the results

1. **The Grace God Has Given.** (v.1-4) *Living in light of the Gospel; God-given grace; depending upon it, feeding on it, nourished in the soul for life-*
 - a. Peter is clear in his identity: *He personalized it. He was the first one that went into the empty tomb . . . Gal. 2:20*
 - i. A servant:
 - ii. An apostle of Jesus: Our God and Savior
 - b. The gift of faith: something we receive; the goal of the word: *turn, be forgiven . . .*
 - i. They possess the same faith as the apostles: the primary sin is unbelief
 1. Content: the faith, not referring here to a body of doctrine
 2. But rather, my personal belief and trust which saves: *faith is the hand which takes hold of the savior*
 - ii. They individually received it . . . again, personal accountability is crucial
 1. Symbolised by individually partaking of communion and baptism
 2. A turnstile . . . not a group project . . . Col. 1:27-28
 - c. By the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: *straight dealing*
 - d. Knowing God through Jesus *brings grace and peace. He alone is the source*
 - e. His divine power has granted to us **everything** we need, *to know, save, guide,*
 - i. About life- *those who lack God and His word are ill-equipped. . .*
 - ii. Of **godliness**- this proves it is for daily life, not just eternal
 - iii. Through the true **knowledge** of Him: this is the ultimate goal (John 17:3)
 1. Knowledge directed toward a specific object, implying fuller and more detailed knowledge
 - iv. Who called us by His own glory and **excellence**: His powerful attributes
 - v. Grace gives to us what He has - everything for life and godliness - *the good stuff, which is eternal, beautiful and good for the soul . . .*

- f. By these (glory and excellence) He has granted to us 'very great' and precious promises: truths of God concerning our future - examples: John 14:1; Luke 12:32; *but also of God's future judgment, justice and vengeance* . . .
 - i. So that **by them** . . .drawing from future grace encouragement and strength leading to obedience and perseverance in the moment
 - 1. Know God's promises: example, Luke 12:32; 14:14; 2 Pet. 3:10-11
 - 2. Take them like seeds into the heart
 - 3. They create a produce . . . fruit . . . two key benefits:
 - ii. You **partake of the divine nature**; now, later (2 Cor. 3:18), John 17:17
 - 1. By partaking of God's words, especially promises, we partake of the divine nature, feeding, transforming, and growing us
 - 2. "In Scripture, God daily comes to his people. In it, he speaks to his people, not from afar, but from nearby. Scripture is the ongoing rapport between heaven and earth." (Herman Bavinck)
 - iii. And **escape the corruption** that is in the world by lust: *don't let the world inside; in the world but not of the world- Jn. 17:17*
 - 1. The only way of escape - -
 - 2. By feeding on His promises and nature, my lustful soul is satisfied and filled and transformed .
 - iv. The sufficiency of the word. *"If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they listen if one rises from the dead" Luke 16:31*
 - v. Do not let Satan tempt you with the myth of complexity - "For I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3)

2. The Effort God Requires. (v.5-7). *adorn the Gospel-*

- a. For this reason, *applying all diligence - here is the motivation; compelling heart -* . . .Phil. 2:13-14
 - i. The need to work and try . . .even baby steps . . . lead to growth
 - ii. Glorious godly traits to pursue and put on - a new possibility for character
- b. In your faith *supply (bring in alongside through toil and effort) . . . these 'layers' grow from one another and build upon one another, all being rooted in faith; informed efforts with specific goals and characteristics; these are not optional and they are not easy - created in us by the Spirit as we apply by believing, relying and obeying . . .*
 - i. **Moral excellence/Virtue:** (*arete*) the Bible's ethical standards inside and out. How I relate to God, self, and others; salt and light; stars in heaven
 - 1. Think Abel, think Noah, think Joseph, think Daniel . . .
 - 2. Radiant moral excellence - acts of virtue (Prov. 31 woman)
 - 3. Belongs to God (his excellent power) cultivated in His people
 - a. Matth. 5:16; Phil. 4:8: mindset . . . starts here

4. His mercy transforms us to put off the old nature and put on the new. To escape the corruption of the world . . . 1 Cor. 10:13

ii. **Knowledge:** (gnosis)

1. "As the head acts, the heart glows." (Nathanael Ranew)
2. "The Puritans often echo Augustine's remark that, just as there are shallows in Scripture where a lamb may wade, so there are depths in Scripture where an elephant may swim- depths which the most learned and godly have yet to plumb. All Christians, therefore, should approach their study of Scripture knowing that they know but little, longing to learn more, and looking to God himself to open them to his own word" (Packer)
3. In the head (classroom; book) then into the shop or field; there is no substitute for knowing by experience; this takes time and effort

iii. **Self Control:** (egkratei)

1. Temperance; Contenance; To bridle; boundaries - fruit of spirit is self control . . . (Gal. 5:22-23) example, James and the tongue -
2. Christ and the Holy Spirit controlling and ruling: my mind; tongue, tone, body, reactions; emotions; money; affections and appetites . Prov. 25:28: lack self control? 'Like a city broken into and without walls'
3. In an out of control world, you do not need to say or do everything which comes to mind; keep your heart near him; change the world, start with me: the effect the faith and study will lead to ;
4. Pleasures go wrong when: wrong place, wrong time; wrong amounts; wrong people. .(CS Lewis)

iv. **Perseverance/Endurance:** (hupomone)

1. Enduring patiently under life's challenges. Sometimes life is so difficult you can only do the next right thing; do the next right thing, and God will meet you there
2. This is a long obedience in the same direction (Peterson)
3. Romans 5:3-4; Hebrews 10:36
4. Choose good habits and stick with them - bear fruit with perseverance, straining and striving - take pains with these things

v. **Godliness** (eusebia) :

1. Define ungodliness: "A refusal, in any shape or form, to live entirely to God's glory and to the praise of His holy name" (MLJ)
2. Godliness: "Devotion (love and fear) to God which leads to a life which is pleasing to God" (Jerry Bridges)

3. Titus 1:1; 1 Tim. 4:7 - discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness
4. We have all we need for godliness (2 Pet. 1:3)

vi. **Brotherly Kindness:** (Philadelphia)

1. Brotherly love - - actions of kindness to each other- good samaritan; Be kind one to another; Trust in the Lord and do good - Love does no wrong to a neighbor - all these relational commands flowing from the grace of God to us; looking for ways to be kind to others, actively seeking opportunity
2. In an age where we are easily offensive and easily offended, how shall we live?
3. "The true test of life is to keep the heart kind in the midst of the most difficult circumstances" (Billy Graham)

vii. **Love** (Agape) : love for all people: the apex, the pinnacle!

1. Willing to be inconvenienced, humiliated, put out, cast out . . self denial; not holding onto your own rights, but giving them up out of love for God and others
2. Divine self giving and self sacrificing love: See 1 Cor. 13; John 15:13; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4
3. But the greatest of these is love!

c. But where do I get these rare qualities? From Jesus! From the Gospel

- i. We get what He has . . from His work and character . . by His grace
- ii. Only by walking with the one who has these in perfect abundance: John 15:1

3. **The Effects God Guarantees** (v.8-11) *ripple effects* . . .ASK **yourself** these questions:

- a. If these qualities are yours, *do you possess them? Am I walking with one who has them?*
- b. And are they increasing? *are these qualities growing in your life? A gradual upward - a slight grade makes all the difference*
- c. Are you practicing these things? (v.10) practice, repetition grows these qualities
- d. They render you . . see, if you are not growing and battling, you are drifting and fading . . *to lack these graces causes so much trouble and hinders the mission of Christ; Compromises your credibility; diverts energy; distracts from the Gospel*
 - i. Effects: turn these warnings into promises . .
 1. Usefulness: *you will not be useless/idle; weariness of pleasure*
 2. Fruitfulness: *you will not be unfruitful*
 3. Awareness: *if you lack these, you are blind or shortsighted; "the reason why things unseen and eternal seem to us so unreal is that*

*we are making so little effort toward moral and spiritual progress”
(Erdman)*

4. Confidence: *make certain assurance of his calling and choosing of you (election: I chose you, you did not choose me; am I chosen?)*
5. Safety/Security: *you will never stumble - guidance, insight, support . . . Peter had stumbled, hadn't he?!*
6. Access: *the way into the kingdom of God will be abundantly supplied to you- all access! 'The way just opened up'*

e. Therefore, get fired up! *Run John Run the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands; better news the Gospel brings, it bids me fly and gives me wings (John Bunyan)*

- i. Chunk the fire . . . preach the Gospel to yourself every day . . .

“The Christian must therefore use the means of grace assiduously, hearing, reading, meditating, watching, praying, worshipping; he must animate himself to universal obedience, an all-round, all-day conformity to God’s revealed will; and he must persevere in it with resolution and resilience. Yet he must remember that the power is from God, not himself, and do it all in the spirit of prayerful dependence, or else he will fail.” (J.I. Packer) - on John Owen

“When we talk about spiritual formation, we are always talking about engaging with God’s word. The reason is simple: Scripture is God’s appointed means for communing with his people. And it is through communion with the living God that the people of God are conformed more and more to his likeness.” (N. Bingham)

“In Scripture God daily comes to his people. In it, he speaks to His people, not from afar, but from nearby- Scripture is the ongoing rapport between heaven and earth.” (Hermann Bavinck)

The Salvation of God: “The Christ who put away our sin and brought us God’s pardon is leading us through this world to a glory for which we are even now being prepared by the instilling of desire for it and capacity to enjoy it, and that holiness here, in the form of consecrated service and loving obedience through thick and thin, is the high road to happiness hereafter.” (J.I. Packer)

“When one knows one is going to be hanged, said Dr Johnson, it concentrates the mind wonderfully: and when, like Baxter from the time of his majority, one lives with one foot in the grave, it imparts an overwhelming clarity both to one's sense of proportion (what matters, and what does not), and also to one's perception of what is and is not consistent with what one professes to believe. (Packer)