

The Pull from Above



Focus

Why run away, My lonely child,
On which the woes of life are piled.
You're not that quick, you'll someday see,
To run so far you're rid of Me.

The illusive thing for which you look,
Slips through your hands, your joy it took.
Complex issues seem so great,
It's bred within destructive hate.

Frustration rules and struggles reign,
So through facades you hide your pain.
So the extensive search begins
To rid yourself of pain within.

But you'll not find your peace through study,
You'll not find your joy through wrath.
You'll not find your love through impatience,
At least love that lasts.

For the key to joy is focus,
Looking to all of those we love.
Turning from our selfish witness,
Unto Christ, God's only Son.

You see, love is not in the taking
But in the giving day by day.
It is the only way under heaven
For your love and joy to stay.

Haven't you often wondered how the giant redwoods of California draw water to their foliage, often more than 300 feet in the air? "It does not come through the pressure from the roots," writes Robert Collier. "It is done by pulling from above." All throughout nature the same law will be found. The draw is from above to grow taller, reach higher. Have you ever realized that only God can make a man what he ought to be? If you were asked, 'Who was the most perfect man who ever lived?' You would probably answer, 'Jesus Christ.' And He was the perfect man only because His human exterior was His divine nature.

"And only as you by faith accept Christ, and He takes up His residence in your soul, will you rise to heights of character and life that God wills for you. How many men today are living stunted, dwarfed, twisted, and inferior lives because they neglect to reach higher? When Gladstone was asked to name the sixty greatest men in history, out of those he named, fifty-six were believers in Jesus Christ and followed Him as their Lord."

—Visitor

We know our salvation is secure in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 2:8 we read, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." The gift is God's to give and ours to receive, but then what? It is an interesting question.

We are inherently a goal-oriented, achievement-based, success-driven people. Some of the most frequently asked questions when we are getting to know someone are, "What do you do?" or "Where do you work?" Who we are is often driven by what we do. We are taught that achievement and advancement are keys to a successful life; however, they are not part of the salvation equation.

When we examine our Christian growth, we need to ensure that our perspective is correct. If we are attempting to obey the commandments in the Bible in order to secure our place in heaven, we are living a lie, for we are only saved by faith, not by works, as Ephesians 2:9 reminds us.

Our work and growth as Christians emanates from the foundation of our faith. The understanding of God's love that while we were yet sinners, "Christ died for us" ignites within us a desire to grow, to learn more about the precious gift we have been given, to bring Him glory and honor.

2 Peter, chapter one, provides some direction pertaining to our growth as Christians. The book is written by Peter, who classifies himself as a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ (If you are wondering what a bondservant is, take a look at Deuteronomy 15:16-17). Peter is writing to "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by righteousness of our God, and Savior, Jesus Christ." So, he is addressing Christians with the goal of equipping the saints. He knows his death is near, and he is reminding us of these things (2 Peter 1:12).

Read 2 Peter 1:2-11 to find Peter's directions.

How is grace and peace multiplied to you? In the knowledge of Him... God has given us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness. How? Through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. The word translated "knowledge," in both of these cases, is "epignosis." It expresses a more thorough participation in the acquisition of knowledge on the part of the learner. It is a knowledge that a husband and wife have for each other.

We have been given everything, but we do not understand what we have been given. As we grow in knowledge, we realize the depth and breadth of the grace God has given to us. When a healthy child is born, he has everything he needs to survive; however, he does not know how everything he has been given works. As the child grows, he or she will learn to crawl, walk, and run. They will learn how to read, write, and reason. It is the same for us. We have been given everything, but we need to grow, learn, apply, and obey.

We become partakers of the divine nature through precious and magnificent promises. What promises? How about John 8:31-36, or 2 Peter 1:4, or John 1:20, or John 3:16, or Galatians 1:3-5, or 1 Peter 3:5, or 1 Peter 3:14-26, or Colossians 1:27, or Ephesians 4:20-24, or John 17:14-17, just to mention a few. The Scriptures are replete with God's promises. I am certain you can add to this list. We have also escaped the corruption that is in this world by lust, because we are no longer slaves of this world or dominated by the flesh but are residents of heaven, freed from slavery, to glorify God.

Peter has certainly given us several reasons that should drive us in our faith to diligently supply the seven qualities he lists in the subsequent verses. The word "supply" is an aorist active imperative or command that means "to abundantly supply and continuously supply." For you etymologists, the verb is derived from the word "choregeo" or "chorus" and originally meant "to bear the expense of the chorus." It came to mean supplying the cost for a purpose, but not only to supply but also to copiously supply what is needed.

We are to apply all diligence to add or supply to our faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The result of adding these qualities is that we become useful and fruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also given promises tied to our growth. In verse 10 we are told, "...for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble;" verse 11 says, "for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

So we can be useful, fruitful, never stumble, and have an abundant entry into the eternal kingdom. Wow! Christian growth is not simply a matter of letting go and letting God; there are specific things each of us must do. The only reason we can diligently supply these qualities is because of who we are in Christ Jesus and what He has done for us. However, it is our responsibility to diligently supply these items. In His power, in His strength, in His enablement, we can take specific steps toward growing as Christians. Growth is not a suggestion—it is an imperative. What happens if we don't? We will be useless, unfruitful, blind and shortsighted.

WEEKLY WALK

"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:17-18). Why grow? Peter answers that question quite clearly. Are you growing? Stagnated? Dormant? Evaluate your life. Change if you need to. Journal your progress.

Monday-What are you doing to grow as a Christian? Do you do a Bible Study? Do you have an accountability partner? Do you go to Him in prayer throughout your day? Journal your condition and how you are going to grow this week.

Tuesday-Write out what you know about God's grace to you. If you don't know, review the scriptures in the lesson. Thank God as your day progresses for His great provision.

Wednesday-Pray to remember that Jesus is always by your side today. Whether in private or public, He knows what we do every moment of every day. Watch for those things that would cause embarrassment. Whatever they are, they need to change. Make a list and eliminate them one by one.

Thursday-Have you supplied anyone's need this week? Look for opportunities to serve your family, fellow worker, even your boss. Journal how you met their need below.

Friday-Have you become desensitized to the things of this world? Have you escaped the corruption of the world by lust, or do you go with the flow? Check your week to see where adjustments or change are needed.

Saturday-In an earlier lesson, I used the phrase, "If you don't go, you can't know. Go to church." But you can't know, if you don't grow. How are you going to continue to grow in your walk with Christ?

Sunday-Attend church. You cannot provide without growing and learning. Church is a critical part of the equation. Get up and go!