

“Keep Moving On!”

2 Peter 3:17-18

Intro. – Young boy came home complaining that most of the church songs were boring, old fashioned with tiresome words that meant little to the younger people. His dad challenged him with these words: “If you think you can write better hymns, why don’t you?” The boy accepted the challenge, went to his room and wrote his first hymn. The year was 1690 and the young man was Isaac Watts. Among the 750 hymns he eventually wrote are: “Joy to the World,” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” “We’re Marching to Zion.”

A sign along the road at the end of an airport runway reads as follows: “KEEP MOVING: If you stop you are in danger and a danger to those flying.”

Someone has said that if you want to make a fortune, make a bathroom scale that lies, *convincingly*.

All the above will help serve to illustrate our text. As this sign is to the motorist around that airport, so is 2 Peter 3:17-18 is to the local church and the individuals making up that congregation. It in essence is saying, “Keep moving (growing), if you stop you are in danger and a danger to those around you.”

Now, is that what this text really is saying? Is growth as a whole and individually all that important? Are we really endangering ourselves and those around us when growth is stunted?

These are the issues we want to address together this morning in light of our text

Purpose: to better understand our need to grow in the grace/knowledge of Christ our Lord

I We Are to GROW

- in urging us to grow, Peter is urging us to take full advantage of the most awesome power we can.
- atomic weapons, earthquakes, tornadoes, revolutions all impress the world with their “power” but these are puny forces compared to the power of growing in Christ

A. Nature Demonstrates This Power

1. Illus. – an acorn = small/insignificant thing; yet, it has potential (growing power). It has the capacity to be a giant of the forest. Such growing illus. further in the fact that enough acorns can be carried in the pocket of one person to furnish lumber for the building of an entire city.
2. Christ’s parable of the Sower = seed sown produced 30, 60, and some 100 fold – seed under the right conditions can produce:
 - Illus. – 1 bushel of seed corn = allowed plant it and produce for a few years and get a \$1 a bushel. How long take to build a solid reserve?
 - 1st yr = \$100; 2 yr = \$10,000; 3rd yr \$1,000,000; 4th yr = \$10,000,000,000

Let me simply say again, growing power is awesome!

B. We Demonstrate This Power

1. What a privilege to see younger ones grow: Illus. – noticed a couple of young people around here: Woods boys... Miller gang... Lucas and Ema Eby... Shyanna and Preston Cunningham... Rieger boys... Madison and Lilly... Connor has matured...
2. We would be concerned and rightfully so, if our kids weren’t growing physically...
3. Not only concerned, but, we would lose so much: Illus. – image holding a baby – Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Shaquille, O’Neal were all little babies at one time; yet, had they not grown we’d missed out on their contributions...Let me simply say again, growing power is awesome!

II We Are to Grow IN GRACE

- we are told to do more than keep on growing – we are to grow *in grace*. What does this mean?

A. Choose the Direction of Growth

1. Ability to choose the path/roadway of life = badge of our specialness
 - a. lower orders of life do not have this capacity – e.g. a monkey can only grow to be a monkey, a pig to be a bigger pig etc. I.e. their capacity for growth is very limited.

- b. our capacity is limitless (what being made in the image of God means)
- 2. This decision is one of the most important decisions we will make in this life:
 - a. what we are is important, but, what we are becoming is of far greater importance!
 - b. we have all eternity in which to travel – we choose which road we want to travel.

Apostle tells us to grow in grace because we have the privilege to choose which direction we will go!

B. This Leads to Our Joyous Best

1. Certain thrill to growing up and being a part of growth isn't there?
2. Any worthwhile attainment is explained by *growth*
 - Illus. – lily is a beautiful flower BUT not always beautiful. It begins with an ugly bulb... How does it attain? It grows. Scripture says: "...*Consider the lilies, how they grow...*"
3. Peter knew from personal experience the thrill of growing but it wasn't easy for him to grow up...
4. John was fanatical, narrow and bigoted:
 - a. forbidding a man casting demons out because he was not one of the twelve.(Lk 9:49)
 - b. eager to burn the inhabitants Samaritan village because they refused night's lodging (Lk 9:54)
 - c. yet he became a man with a roomy heart... the apostle of love...

Why had such changes come about? GROWTH = the only way one can become their best for Christ!

C. To Fail in This is Tragic

1. I.e. to fail to grow is to become one of arrested development:
 - a. Illus. – young man in Bloomington, IN, Carl Wilkerson – he was a midget = proportionate but diminutive whereas a dwarf = disproportioned and diminutive...
 - b. why we're instructed to lay aside the sin... forsake not assembling together... study to show ourselves approved unto God...
 - c. to neglect these and other instructions from our Lord is to stunt growth in grace which will result in spiritual midgets
2. Failure to grow always means degeneration
 - a. we live on an incline – we go up or we go down.
 - b. failure to go up inevitably results in going down.
 - c. Christian who fails to grow begins at once to decline like a fatal disease.

No wonder Peter urges us to grow. He knew the results when one does not. He knew to refuse to grow is not only missing the joy of growing to one's best; it also means to grow towards one's worst.

III We Are to Grow IN KNOWLEDGE

- we must face the fact that none of us can grow by merely wishing it so – if that were the case I would be 6'6" and weigh 230 lbs... We CAN grow in grace by also growing in knowledge... involves:

A. First Means of Growth – Proper Food

1. To grow physically we need food – same is true spiritually speaking.
2. How did Peter grow? First step = fellowship with Christ. Grew by keeping in touch with Master!
 - a. Jesus said, "*I am bread.../water of life... Meat to eat...*"
 - b. point: can't grow without God any more than we can grow physically without proper food.
3. What Jesus meant when He said in John 15 "*I am vine and you are the branches...*"
 - a. such a relationship is vital – as long as the branch remains in contact with vine (its life giving source) there is growth, but, lose contact and the branch ceases to grow, withers and dies.
 - b. you and I know of such lives – lives so full of potential; yet, they have allowed themselves to be separated from the branch.
4. To grow then, we must keep in touch with God – fellowship together... study the Word together...

God has provided all that is needed to keep in touch; yet, there is the danger of allowing ourselves to be spiritually separated from God...

B. Second Means of Growth – Exercise

1. Illus. – ever watch a baby kick/wave and try to swallow fist and fingers? Baby doing daily dozen...

2. We never come to our best except at the price of struggle – Illus. – little mother being begged by her son to carry him when all the time he could probably carry her!
3. Why some churches are weak/ineffective – those who are trying to be Christians without putting themselves to the trouble. I.e. these are the ones who insist on being carried... Theirs is a cheap religion = religion that doesn't satisfy God or themselves!
4. Point: all contented and joyous Christians are growing Christians and all growing Christians are battling Christians.

Thus, when given instructions to grow in grace and knowledge we are being called to meet the conditions of growth so that we'll realize our best potential.

Conclusion: In summary, I trust now we all have a better understanding of the injunction given to us in this text – keep moving on!

When Israel was in the wilderness, God commanded them to “*go forward.*” The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews pleads, “*Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity...*” (Hebrew 6:1). The inspired Apostle Paul wrote, “*I press toward the goal...*” (Philippians 3:14)

Most of us have seen or even been involved with a “fender bender” on a busy expressway. One car in the line of traffic suddenly stops and soon a whole string of cars are caught up in a line of accidents.

That's the way it is with believers NOT growing in Christ. Their example or lack thereof, causes a chain reaction. Rather than being a source of encouragement, such becomes discouraging and weakens brothers and sisters all around..

Yes, “Keep Moving On!” – for your own sake AND for the sake of those around you!