

...But Grow in the Grace and Knowledge...

The apostle Peter closed his second epistle with this important advice to those who would escape the apostasy that he had described earlier in the book. His inspired advice was: "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." There are some very important truths which can be found in the text, and which we should take seriously if we are going to develop into the kind of Christians that we ought to be. Growth in Christ should be one of our primary goals as Christians, but many of us do not grow in Christ because we will not take the time and the trouble to give ourselves over to that great task. There are those of us who try to do so, and sometimes we are "put down" by those who may disagree with us on some point or another, or in some interpretation of a passage, or passages of Scripture.

In order to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, we must have the attitude of the student, that is, we must always be hungry to know more about what the Word of God teaches upon any theme. Sometimes it is asserted that God does not care what we know, he is concerned with whether or not we are obedient to him. But God does care what we know, and for that reason he advised the early Christians, and all others since that time that we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

To grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus means that we move deeper and deeper into that grace which God has bestowed on us. It is by strengthening one's faith, and that is done by ever growing in knowledge, that one finds himself going more and more deeply into the grace of God. There are many false and offensive concepts of grace that are in the world today, and one of them is that it is like the lump-sum payment given at the lottery, and there is nothing we can do to affect that grace or the giving of it. Such is not the case! The greater the faith, the more open we are to the grace of God, and since faith comes by hearing (studying) the Word of God (Romans 10:17) the depth to which we can go in the grace of God depends upon our growing in the knowledge of God.

In 2 Peter 3:18, the word "grow" is in the present imperative form, and it denotes a linear progression. The idea behind the verb is that these Christians had grown in times past, were still growing in the present and should continue to grow in the future. For that reason some translations of the New Testament have rendered the word, "keep on growing." (That is the import of the verb in this location, but the import of a present tense verb in the Greek is always determined by the context in which it is found. Many times it has this linear aspect which means to keep on doing a certain thing, or having a certain thing done.) Since this word is in the present imperative, it amounts to a command from God that the children of God should keep on growing in Christ's grace and in knowledge of Christ, that is, in the knowledge about Christ which comes to us from Christ. That anyone would deny that the apostle had reference to growing in those things that are revealed to us in the Scriptures is unthinkable. (Incidentally, if the Christians as early as AD 80-85, and that is about when this book was written, were to grow in the knowledge of Christ, they had to have had the Scriptures in order to do so. The idea that the early church never had all the Scriptures of the New Testament until the organization of the Canon in the third century after Christ is patently false, and if it is not, God, through Peter commanded these Christians to do what could not be done!)

The word "knowledge" in this context, comes from a word (*gnosei*) which is the kind of knowledge that comes to a person as a result of personal application of oneself. Knowledge of the Word of God comes to us the same way as knowledge of mathematical principles. Sometimes it is acquired very easily, and sometimes there are things which are "hard to be understood," that we must spend years studying in order to grow in that knowledge.

But one cannot grow in any knowledge if he is arrogant and dogmatic about what he already knows. There should be no subject in the Bible to which we are unwilling or afraid to give our renewed attention. And when we study the Word of God, we must be very careful that we do not hold dear to our hearts the theories and doctrines of some man so that we end up denying what the Bible plainly teaches. A thing is true or false, depending on what the Bible says regardless of what some man should say about that thing. Make it a project of your life to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!" Remember that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

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