# 2 Peter 3:18 (Hugh Henry Snell) 51281

Things New and Old: Volume 27, Growth in Grace (3:18)

One mark of a true believer is, that he has the consciousness that he needs Christ—that whatever else he can do without, he cannot do without Him. He so knows that all his springs are in Christ, and that nothing can make up for a lack of occupation with Him, that he says—

A true mark of a thriving soul, is, that he searches the scriptures for Christ, because he knows, on the authority of the Lord Himself, that they testify of Him. He remembers, too, that after Christ rose from among the dead, how He instructed and comforted His disciples, by ministering to them out of the ancient scriptures the things concerning Himself. And though he thanks God for giving unto him eternal life, and making him His child, he is well aware that there is progress in spiritual life, and that we are enjoined to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 3:18.)

In Peter’s first epistle we are also admonished as to growth: “As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” (1 Pet. 2:2, 3.) It is clear, then, that the written word is that by which we grow, through its being received into our hearts by faith. And it is also equally true that those who neglect to read and ponder the scriptures, cannot expect to grow in grace.

We read that our God is “the God of all grace.” Precious truth! God, then, is the source of ail grace, and it has come to us by Jesus Christ His Son, who was “full of grace and truth.” Thus, though “the God of all grace” is the source, the channel through which it has come to us is Christ, and the ministry of it to our souls is through the written word, in the power of the Holy Ghost. In this way we are “established in grace” know we stand in grace before God, and that we are under grace; so that, dwelling in the favor of God, we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Thus drinking into our souls the precious word of the God of all grace produces grace in us, and the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, we have both spiritual strength and enjoyment, so as to walk in grace toward others. Hence, when faithful service is spoken of, we are first exhorted to a be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” By the grace of God we understand not only the full favor in which He has made us to stand, but as having loved us while we were yet sinners, and having brought us into the same nearness and relationship to Himself as Christ, making us His co-heirs, thus giving us the hope of sharing His glory with Him; and not only so, but, by His present offices in heaven, providing for us as to every possible need in our pathway to the glory. The more the word of God is brought home to our hearts, and received in faith, by the teaching and power of the Holy Ghost, the more we increase in the knowledge of God, and the more the grace of God melts and molds our hearts. In this we know there is progress, and we become more able to show forth practically the characteristics of Him a who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will also accompany growth in grace; only there seems to be a tendency among us to be taken up with one or two views of Christ, to the neglect of others. Some Christians are like a person with a box of precious stones before him, and all of them different, who selects one or two, and never looks at the beauties of the others. Judging from the prayers and conversation of many beloved saints, there is little reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, beyond what He did for us as a sacrifice on the cross. Others may add something about His Priesthood or Advocacy, and some may speak of Him also as Head of the body; but few of God’s dear children seem aware of the immense variety of ways the Savior is presented to us: what He is in His own Person, His moral perfectness, and offices; what He is to God, and what God has made Him unto us. To confine our thoughts to what Jesus did for us on the cross, must always be connected with serious loss. So far as it goes, it is certainly most precious, because all our blessings are founded on the work of the cross; but on taking up some of the books of scripture, we find a great deal more than that, and our souls become astonished at the vast variety of ways in which His word is given for our profit, and through which Christ is ministered to our souls.

Take, for example, the Epistle to the Hebrews. Perhaps you cannot find saints in a lower state anywhere than the Hebrews were, for they were thinking of going back to Judaism, and thus abandoning christian ground. To such we find the inspired writer ministering Christ in a great variety of aspects. In running rapidly through this precious letter, we may observe, in the first chapter, the Son of God looked at as to His Deity; and in the second chapter, His perfect Manhood. In the third chapter we see Him as the Apostle sent down from heaven, and the High Priest gone up into heaven; also One greater than Moses, and Son over His own house. In the fourth chapter He is greater than David and Joshua. In the fifth chapter, He is seen to be greater than Aaron, and the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. In the sixth chapter He is spoken of as the Forerunner for us entered. In the seventh chapter, He is shown to be greater than Abraham, having, as the Son consecrated for evermore, an unchangeable and unsuccessional priesthood. Between the second and ninth chapters, He is presented to us as a merciful and faithful High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, passed through the heavens, able to succor us in temptation, sympathize with us in our infirmities, and ever living to make intercession as to our need; and though carrying out Aaronic functions, is after the order of Melchisedec. In chapters nine and ten, the eternal value of His one sacrifice, giving remission of sins, a purged conscience, with liberty, through His blood, to enter into the holiest, where our High Priest is; and other weighty truths, are blessedly set forth, introducing the believer now, by faith, inside the veil, as a purged worshipper. In the eleventh chapter, we read of “the reproach of Christ,” as connected with the walk of faith. In the twelfth chapter, we are called, while running the race of faith, to look off unto Jesus, now seated on the throne of God, as the One who began and completed the path of faith. Thus, in this epistle we are directed to Jesus as now seated on the right hand of the throne of God, as the One who purged our sins, as the sitting Priest, and as the Forerunner, who, while here, trod the path of faith perfectly. In the thirteenth chapter, after looking at Him, the virtue of whose blood has been brought within the veil, and His having suffered without the gate, in its practical bearing on us, the epistle concludes with another contemplation of the abundant glories of the Son, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom the God of peace brought again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Now, we affectionately ask the christian reader, Is it possible thus briefly to look through this epistle, without being struck with the variety of aspects in which the Person, accomplished work, moral glories, and offices of Christ are set forth, with a view to raising souls from their low estate, and establishing their hearts in the goodness and grace of God?

We shall find much the same in most of the other epistles. Let us take a brief glance at the touching letter of the apostle to the saints at Philippi. They are addressed as saints “in Christ Jesus.” In the first chapter the inspired writer is so occupied with the glory and worth of Christ, that he estimates everything he speaks of according to Him. Hence, as to service, he looks forward to the day of Christ, he rejoices wherever Christ is preached, looks at the chains he wears as his bonds in Christ, and says, “ For me to live is Christ.” When he thinks of fruit-bearing, it is “the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.” His whole desire was, whether in life or in death, that Christ should be magnified in his body. If he thought of departing, it would be “to be with Christ;” and he never seemed to forget that this was the place where we have, on Christ’s behalf, “to suffer for his sake.”

In the second chapter we have Christ as our Exemplar, in His perfect path of unselfish lowliness and obedience, tracked out for our imitation. The apostle also speaks of himself as ready to be offered as a sacrifice for Christ; of Timothy, as one who was devoted, not to his own things, but to Christ; and of Epaphroditus, as sick, nigh unto death, for the work of Christ.

In the third chapter, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ seen in heaven is brought out, as the mighty power which delivered Saul from all confidence in the Jews’ religion, and made him a heavenly man on earth. It enabled him to suffer the loss of all things, and to count them but dung. As a heavenly man on earth, he now runs on to Him as the prize he hopes to win, and possess forever. He desires to know Christ better, to have the power of His resurrection more fully working in him, and to experimentally enter into the fellowship of His sufferings as the rejected One by man. The apostle weeps over those who called themselves Christians, and yet whose walk was so in the flesh, and like the world, that they were enemies to the cross, by practically denying God’s judgment of the flesh and sentence on the world by that cross. He would say of himself and others that they were heavenly people on earth, serving Christ in a world where He is disallowed, with resources, joys, and home in heaven, and looking from thence for the Savior to come, and change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like unto His body of glory, and thus give us bodily capacities to serve and honor Christ in eternal glory.

In the fourth chapter, we are reminded that God will supply all our need here, not grudgingly, but according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus; and that, however trying the path, we are competent to go through it all, through the strength which Christ supplies. Paul can rejoice in the Lord always, though a prisoner for His sake. He speaks of the ministration of temporal supplies, sent to him from Philippi, as an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well pleasing to God.

We trust we need not bring further testimony from the scriptures to show the great variety of ways Christ is presented for our soul’s blessing; and when this is considered, does it not behoove us, if we would be wise and faithful servants, to heed the inspired exhortation, to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?” H. H. S.

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