

**Sermon 10 2 Peter.3.18. P. B~n May 1
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2 Peter. 3.18.P.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and
Saviour Jesus Christ.

The object of the apostle Peter in this epistle as he declares,
is
to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, by making
mention of certain doctrines such as the destruction of the world by
fervent heat and the reproduction of a new heaven and a new earth
wherein dwilleth [sic] righteousness. He alludes to the fact that

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that [sic] there would be scoffers deriding the coming of the day of judgement. He exhorts them to diligence that they might be found of him in peace. He exhorts them to beware let [sic] they be led away by the error of the wicked, and fall from their own steadfastness. But, say he, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Instead of being led away and fall from their steadfastness he exhorts them to growth in grace which will be the theme of this discourse. We are taught in the scriptures,

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in unambiguous terms that growth in growth in grace is the fruit of regeneration and one of the benefits of adoption and sanctification. These benefits are assurance of hope, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, Increase of Grace and perseverance. These are [sic] doctrines are precious to the believer, on which he delights to dwell [sic], as they serve, when rightly understood to quick - [sic] him in duty, and show him his own weakness and that his strength and entire dependance [sic] is on God.

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I shall endeavor

- I. To show what is ment [sic] by the doctrine.
- II. Thow [sic] that it is a duty enjoined upon Christians.
- III. Inquire whether true believers do increase in grace.
- IV. Show what are the evidences of growth in grace.
- V. Point out some of the means by which they may increase in grace.

To each of these topics let us give our sincere attention.

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And

I. Show or explain what is ment [sic] by the doctrine.

We are not to understand by this doctrine, that any one has an increase in the number of his Christian graces, for all are given him at regeneration, which he ever has. All these graces are necessary to salvation; but if any new grace is to be communicated after regeneration, then he is not prepared for the kingdom of heaven although he is a child of God. No new grace therefore

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can be implied by increase of grace. By increase of grace then we are to understand.

1. His growth in all his Christian graces which he received at regeneration.

An infant child has all the parts and faculties of a man which grow with his growth and strengthen with his strength; so also with the newly regenerate. Regeneration is the dawn or infancy of his spiritual existance [sic], and as he advances in experience, he advances in

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an increase or an enlargement of those heavenly graces which first constituted him a child of God. These graces are constantly enlarging or increasing in strength by every successive act of sanctification through life. To illustrate this increase in moral worth, and glory, and happiness the most beautiful and sublime of all objects in nature is employed. No object is more beautiful and majestic than the dawning of day and the rising of the sun to his meridian glory. Hence we have this scriptural illustration of the

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Christian's increasing in all those heavenly graces received at regeneration. The path of the just, is as a shining light, which shineth

more and more unto the perfect day. Job. 4.18.

2. To grow in grace is to increase in Divine knowledge.

The Christian who increases in grace, is a studious scholar in

Divine things. He makes the word of God his study, in which he learns more and more of the character and perfections of God; discovers more of the purity and spirituality of the

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Divine law; he becomes more acquainted with loveliness of the character of Christ; the importance of his mission, and the benevolence of God in the plan of redemption. He sees more clearly the wisdom and benevolence of God in his providential dealings with mankind. While he increases in this knowledge, he is at the same time learning more of himself; his own weakness, imperfections and inclination to wander from God. This is a natural consequence from

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his increase of knowledge of the Divine law; for learning more clearly its spirituality, he sees more clearly when he departs therefrom.

3. With this increase of knowledge of Divine things, there is also an increase of relish for them.

This relish grows with his growth and strengthens with his strength as he advances in the Divine life; and becomes as his meat and his drink in old age. The clearer his conceptions of the Divine character, the more he discovers worthy of his love and admiration.

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At regeneration is implanted the germ of holiness, which is constantly meeting with new objects, as the character of God is developed, to expand its powers and invigorate its growth. Old things are done away, all things have become new. Love for sin is removed and a love for holi-[sic] is begun, which like the faculties of a child increase in strength and intensesness. Understanding more clearly, the spirituality of the Divine law, he feels more sensibly when he departs from it, and becomes not only a rule of actions

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but a check upon his inclinations. The transforming influence of the Divine law, creates within him a greater relish for it, and it becomes the the [sic] subject of his meditation and delight, day and night. Hence he makes greater attainments in the divine life and in spiritual enjoyments.

4. To grow in grace is to increase in evangelical repentance.

As the growing Christian advances in a more correct knowledge of the spirituality, of the Divine law, he discovers the more clearly ~~that sin is~~ exceeding sinfulness [sic]

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of sin and the odiousness of its nature. It therefore becomes more hateful to him, and desires to be delivered from its influence as a thing exceedingly loathsome and offensive. This causes him to be more humble and meek and penitent before God, exercising that repentance, which is unto life, needing not to be repented of. He becomes more lovely in the sight of God, and the happier the closer his communion is, with his heavenly Father.

These [sic] are the genial fruits of evangelical repentance.

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5. To increase in grace is to increase in faith also.

Faith purifies the heart and binds the soul closer to God. A
an increased
love of holiness follows and ^ hatred to sin. Faith overcomes
the world, its temptations & its allurements, and being the
substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen,
he, that increases in grace, looks with more certainty to the
glorious prise [sic] in heaven, which arises with greater brilliancy
upon his enraptured vision. Heaven appears nearer to him, gives
its joys a present substance, and creates in

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him a longing desire to enter upon his rich inheritance. To him to die, is great gain, but to live is Christ's and he acquiesces [sic] with holy confidence in the Divine appointment, and endures as a faithful servant till Christ shall bid him come.

6. To grow in grace, is to grow in love to God and man.

As it has been observed before, the excellency of the Divine character, will become more lovely and consequently more beloved. The law which is a transcrip [sic] this character will be more an object of love & attention, and obedience more chur [sic]

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and implicit. And in fine, every Christian grace is improved. The growing Christian is more meek, and inoffensive, more devoted and humble, more self denying and patient; rejoicing in hope, enduring reproach for Christ's sake; given to hospitality and a lover of peace.

II. Thou that it is a duty enjoined on Christians.

That it is a duty to grow in grace may be seen both from reason and revelation; for whatever is desirable in the Christian character and attainable is necessarily

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required, as God designs the perfection of the soul. Hence it is enjoined,

1. By his word.

Peter by inspiration says Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, Knowledge, And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2.Pet. 1.5-8. As all scripture

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is given by inspiration of God, this passage should be received as direct to the point now in question. Paul exhorts his brethren [sic] to the same duty, saying, We beseech you, brethren [sic] and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought [sic] to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. 1.Thess. 4.1. To these there might be added much more scriptural proof to show that it is a christian duty, but this is sufficient for our purpose, and leads us to inquire,

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2. Whether this doctrine is enforced as a duty by the example of primitive Christians. As God has been pleased to give important means of grace for the spiritual improvement of his children, they on the other hand have deemed it their duty and privilege ~~and duty~~ to use them. God gives not to us advantages and means of improvement, without annexing to it a duty. He has also pronounced his blessings upon those who desire a greater degree of conformity to his will, or in other words an increase

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of grace. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Math. 5.6. Besides his benediction on such as desire a greater conformity to his divine law, he adds a promise that they shall be satisfied: while on the other hand, he has pronounced his woe against those who do not thus strive or are at ease in Zion. It is then not only a duty to strive after an increase of grace, but a sin to neglect it.

But the example of primitive saints, show that they considered

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it a high and exalted privilege to increase in grace, Says one As the heart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee O God. Ps. 42. 1-2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall we come and appear before God. Again Paul to his Phil. brethren [sic], Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend which that for also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those

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things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize [sic] of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Phil. 3.12.14. In these passages of scripture we see manifested an earnest longing after a closer walk with God. Nor do the individuals count themselves perfect or that they had arrived to that glorious state of moral purity and excellency which they most earnestly desired, but that they were still striving after more exalted attainments.

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Guided by the Spirit of God they had placed the standard of piety high where it should be, to which they were striving to arrive by a constant effort in the use of appointed means.

And the idea is suggested that they could not be satisfied on earth with their most exalted attainments, but desired to be in his more immediate presence where there is fullness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures for ever more. As David says, when shall I come and appear before God.

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Hence we see, it is an imperious duty enjoined upon Christians to grow in grace, enforced by the word of God and the example of all saints. That it is considered a high and exalted privilege to advance in the Divine life; and we have much reason to believe from the same high authority that it is a peculiar characteristic of true believers earnestly to desire and to strive after an increase of grace. Though they ~~they~~ may have arrived to a full assurance of hope, they still desire and seek after higher

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attainments in the Divine life, a clearer view of the Divine character; and the more they advance, the more will they desire to know of him, until their earnest desires break forth in the language of Paul To die and be with Christ is far better, or of Job, I would not live always; or of David, When shall I awake in thy likeness.

To be assimilated to the ever adorable character of God and to enjoy a more intimate union with Christ their Redeemer, seems to be the aim and duty of every true believer. This is in exact accordance with the general

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plan of God's government. He has created nothing perfect, but brought beings and things into existence [sic] to grow and increase in beauty and excellence. This in a peculiar manner is illustrated in his moral beings. Man he created upright, but not perfect in knowledge and moral beauty. He was endowed with powers of body and mind to increase and improve. Sin produced a great disruption in the moral harmony of his soul; but regeneration in a degree restores that harmony, and lays a foundation on which to build a beautiful

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superstructure of moral excellence. This seems to correspond with the general plan of God's government and wise arrangement in natural objects. The tree does not come to maturity at once, but commences with the germ and rises to maturity which ^{requires} ^ years to accomplish. The child does not arise at once to manhood in body or mind, yet by the use of the ordinary means wisely arranged for that purpose, we see the powers of body and mind gradually expanding and coming forward to maturity; and if any of those means were neglected, there would

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be a corresponding deficiency in in [sic] the general development
[sic] of the being.

So also in spiritual things. At regeneration there is
implanted the germ or desire of moral improvement, or increase of
grace, which sometimes so absorbs the whole moral feelings,
insomuch that the Christian desires to be absent from the body and
be present with the Lord. Such desires will lead the individual to
grasp with grateful emotions, all the means which God has wisely
provided, for his religious improvement

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or growth in grace. In respect to these God has been very abundant; among which the sacrament of the Lord's supper is eminently distinguished. But as I intend in the further prosecution of this discourse at some future time, to dwell particularly on this point, I would here merely observe, that we receive all the means, which our heavenly Father hath put into our hands for our spiritual improvement, with gratitude and praise. And especially in the one now before us, may we be prepared to meet our Saviour &

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one another at his table and receive from it all those spiritual comforts and consolations designed by it, that we might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and S. J. C.

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