

# **GROWTH IN GRACE:**

**BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON  
PREACHED LORD'S DAY MORNING,**

*June 12, 1808,*

**AT**

**ZOAR CHAPEL,  
GREAT ALIE STREET, GOODMAN'S FIELDS.**

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Christian, &c. &r.**

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*But by the grace of God, I am what I am,*

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**1808.**



## SERMON.

2 Peter 3:16. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE apostle Peter directs this, and the former epistle, to the strangers throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. He reminds them of their election of God, or his choice of them unto eternal life and glory, as expressed by him thus—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The apostle sends this second epistle to “stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, that they might be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; of the certainty of Christ’s coming a second time without sin unto salvation. For the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of

persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the day of God. Therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom be glory both now and forever. Amen.”

In attending to the words of the text, I shall

*First*—Show what we are to understand by grace.

*Secondly*—What is intended by growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And

*Thirdly*—Show that all praise and glory is due to him. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

In the first place, grace is significant, of God himself. God is grace itself—it is his nature and essence—without it he never did, or ever will exist. Hence, he is so often in the scripture called gracious—“The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, the Lord! the Lord God! merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Exod.34:6.—Again, “gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.” Psalm 116:5.

In the second place, grace is significant of his favor and good will towards the sons of men; and is no other than love, unmerited love, exercising and communicating itself in a free and sovereign manner. For the scriptures declare, “that God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life”. John 3:16.

Moreover, the grace of God arises from the goodness of his nature, and not from anything he saw in us, as his creatures, no for he exercises it according to the good pleasure of his will: as it is written, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious; and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.” Exod. 33:19.

Thus it is plain that grace is independent of all merit in us, and of all works done by us: so says the apostle Paul—“Even so, then, at this present time, also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” (Mark, the election of grace). “And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise, work is no more work.” Rom. 11:6. Again, “who hath saved us, and called us, with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” 2 Tim.1:9. Hence the same apostle says, “it is by the grace of God I am what I am.” 1 Cor.15: 10.

I come now to show you how the grace of God is displayed, or manifested towards us.

1. In election—which by the apostle is emphatically called the election of grace, that passed in God’s eternal mind, before works, either good or bad, were done, agreeable to the following words: “for the children being

not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say, then? is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” Thus, it is plain, that every spiritual blessing we enjoy is “according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.” Eph.1: 3—7.

2. The grace of God is eminently displayed in the covenant he has made with all his dear people, in Christ, their head and representative: the tenor of which is this—“I will be your God, and you shall be my people” Ezek. 37: 27. Hence the Lord says, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David, (that is Christ) my servant, thy seed will I establish forever; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me.” Psalm 89: 3, 4, 34, 35, 36.

Furthermore, nothing but free, rich, and sovereign grace, could move God to make a covenant with his dear Son on our behalf; and nothing but free grace, and undeserved and unmerited love, could move Christ to engage with his Father in it. It was nothing short of free grace that stored the covenant with all spiritual blessings for the covenant seed: and it was free grace that filled it with exceeding great and precious promises. For all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God. Hence, says one of the blood royal, the psalmist David, “he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire’

3. The grace of God appears conspicuous, and shines very illustrious in redemption, by Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us, that “he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” Tit.2:14. This the apostle Paul attributes to grace; yea, to the riches of grace, according to the following scripture—“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Eph.1:7—Also regeneration, effectual vocation, the pardon of sin, adoption, and every other divine and spiritual blessing, is of free grace, or unmerited and undeserved love and favor: in short, it is “by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.” Eph, 2:8, 9.

I come now, in the second place, to show what is intended by “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

1. Observe, that grace, as it is in God, its author and fountain, cannot grow—for he is the perfection of grace and glory. But as we “out of his fulness have received, (as John says) and grace for grace,” I will call your attention to the following observations.

First—Every believer may be said to “grow in grace,” as he is favored with enlarged views, glorious manifestations, and the blessed knowledge of the impulsive cause of grace, which is the good will and sovereign pleasure of our covenant God and Father; for nothing out of himself could ever induce him to be favorable to us, and give us grace in Christ Jesus. Every spiritual blessing, every mercy, every promise, and every communication of grace, is “according to the good pleasure of his will.” As it is written, “having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” Eph 1:9—13.

Thus grace, free grace, takes its rise from God; it is of his own good will we are born again—made wise unto salvation—justified freely from all things—sanctified and made complete in Christ Jesus—redeemed from all evil, and brought to the full enjoyment of all good. Thus, grace is all of God, from first to last; it is all according to the good pleasure of his will. Which brings me in the second place, to show you the procuring cause of grace, which is the blood of Christ; and which the apostle Peter calls “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot; who, verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for us.” 1 Pet.1: 19, 20. When I say the procuring cause, I do not mean grace in the divine mind of God; for as before observed, nothing out of himself could move him to give us grace; but I mean the communications and enjoyments of grace here, and glory hereafter, consistent with the attributes and perfections of Deity. In other words, the sensible sinner is given to see that all the grand treasures of divine grace, the infinite riches of God’s everlasting love, and every other covenant blessing, flow through the sufferings and death of a dear Redeemer, as its proper and only channel.—For the apostle Paul tells us, “he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, we, being justified by faith, have peace with God, and access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God: for while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, much more, then,



being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. Rom. 4: 5; and v. 1, &c. Moreover, there is another thing to be observed, and that is the efficient cause of grace, which is Jehovah, the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of promise. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John. 14:16, 17. He is also the Spirit of life, of love, and of a sound mind. And the Lord Jesus says, “he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” John 14:14.

And blessed be God, that Jehovah, the Spirit, is pleased to quicken, revive, and encourage poor sensible sinners; by directing them to the person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, our dear Redeemer.

1. As it respects the person of Christ, he enables us to say, as the spouse said, “his head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy and black as a raven; his eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set; his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh; his hands are as gold rings set with beryl; his belly is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires; his legs are pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; his mouth is most sweet.”

(Observe, his mouth is most sweet.) She wondered, no doubt, as we often do, to this day, at the gracious words that drop from his lips. “Yea, he is the altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” Sol. Song 5: 11, &c.

2. As it respects his blood, the precious blood of Christ—the good Spirit of God applies it to the conscience, whereby it is “purged from dead works, to serve the living God in newness of spirit.” Heb.9: 14. And not only so, but the apostle John says, “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

3. But he not only opens to our view the beauty and majesty of Christ’s person, the power and efficacy of his precious blood, but also reveals, brings near, and puts on, the best robe, even the righteousness of God, which enables the poor sinner to say, “in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Isa.45:24. —Again, “as for me, I will behold his face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awaken in his likeness.” Psalm 17:15.

4. The final cause, or ultimate end of all grace, is the glory of God in all the divine perfections of his nature. Grace, free grace, in all its blessed and glorious influences, or operations, aims at nothing less than the honor and glory of God. As it is written, “this people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise. Isa. 43: 21. That God in all things may be glorified.

Thus, the believer may be said to grow in grace, in proportion as the Lord, the Spirit, is pleased to give him an enlarged knowledge of the grand, impulsive, procuring, efficient, and final cause of divine grace. The sovereign will and good pleasure of the eternal God, is the impulsive or moving cause:—the blood of Christ Jesus, is the procuring cause:—Jehovah, the Spirit, in his blessed and sweet operations in the hearts of his people, is the efficient cause:—and the everlasting glory of Deity, is the final cause and ultimate end of all.

This is very different indeed to what many in our day talk about. They would fain have us believe, that when the Lord, in the fulness of time, according to his eternal purpose, is pleased to make us (manifestly) the happy recipients of grace, that grace makes the old nature, or the old man, better; yea, that he grows better every day. I believe in my conscience, (as I have often told you) that such mongrel stuff has distressed and burdened many of the Lord's dear children: for though they have waited week after week, month after month, and year after year, to find this wonderful amendment, yet, instead of getting better, they rather grow worse, (that is in their own views;) for that which is flesh, is flesh; and all flesh hath corrupted its way. "In me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." But blessed be God, that that which is spirit, is spirit. And though we are tormented from day to day, by the devil, sin, the world, and by our own corrupt nature, and wicked heart,

yet God has promised “that grace shall reign through righteousness even unto eternal life.”

But observe, there are four descriptions of characters mentioned in the book of God—babes, children, young men, and fathers. Now the principle of grace is as perfect and complete in the babe, as it is in the father; but there is not the same knowledge. Hence, says the apostle in my text, “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The Almighty has promised to teach his children; and has declared, “he will send them pastors after his own heart, that shall feed them with knowledge and understanding.” Jer.3:15. Moreover, he has said, “they shall go in and out, and find pasture.” John10:9. David is witness to the truth of the promise: he says, “the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want he maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters.” Psalm 23:1,2. Again, the prophet Hosea tells us, “that we shall know if we follow on to know the Lord. That his goings forth are prepared as the morning, (that is, from everlasting the morning of mercies); and that he shall come unto us as the rain, as the former and latter rain unto the earth.” The former rain is emblematical of the influences of the Spirit of God in a poor sinner’s heart, compared in the scriptures, to “parched ground, a thirsty land, and a barren wilderness.” See Isa. 35. And this rain causes a precious crop of heavenly fruit to spring up, viz. faith, hope, joy, peace, and love, with

every other grace of the Holy Spirit. And the latter rain is also emblematical of the quickening, animating, and reviving influences of the Spirit of God in our hearts, when these graces under the burning heat of the sun of persecution, seemingly wither, and apparently die—“Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” Sol. Song 4:16.

Furthermore, every renewed soul has knowledge of God the Father, the Father of Christ, and their God and Father in Christ. Hence, says the apostle John, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” 1 John 2:13. They have knowledge of the love of God, the Father, which appears in choosing them in Christ from everlasting; blessing them in him with all spiritual blessings; and sending his dear Son, in the fulness of time, to die for them, even “the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God.” They have knowledge of God, the Father, having proclaimed his name “as a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin:” yea, as a God that abundantly pardons. Which enables them to say, “who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage; he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.” Micah 7:18. They know him as the God of all grace: they know that he is the author and giver of every grace unto them: they know that their faith is not of themselves, it is the gift of God: that their good and lively

hope through grace is of him. The God of hope and love is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.

But my text says, “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Every renewed and heaven-born soul has knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; for even the world takes knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. They have knowledge of him, as Jehovah, the only true God. The Saviour says, “this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3. And the apostle John says, “we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20.

Thus, they know him as God; and not only so, but also, they know him as man, truly man, partaker of the same flesh and blood with them; “and in all things (as the scripture saith) made like unto them;” and so, their elder brother and near kinsman, who can but have sympathy with them. And thus, being both God and man, he is fit to be the Mediator between both, and to take care of all things appertaining to God; “and to make reconciliation for the sins of his people.”

They know him also as their Prophet, who daily teaches them by his good Spirit, his word, and his servants. They

know him as their great High Priest, who by his own sacrifice has made atonement for their sins; and by his intercession pleads for every blessing they need. They know him as their King, who rules over, protects, and defends them; and they, through grace, become his willing subjects, and esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right. They know him as their everlasting Father, who bears an everlasting love to them; and as their Maker and Husband, who has betrothed them to himself in loving kindness and tender mercies. They know him as “a friend that loveth at all times;” yea, as a friend “that sticketh closer than a brother.” In short, they know him as Jehovah, their Lord and Saviour, and that by the operations and witness of the Spirit of God in their hearts. This, and this only, is “growing in grace.”

I come thirdly, to show very briefly, that to him all praise and glory is due, agreeable to my text; to him be glory, not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit, no; but to him, with the Father and the Spirit, be glory everlasting, for our salvation. “Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth’s sake.” Psalm 115: 1. “It is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. And he shall bring forth the top-stone with shoutings, crying, grace, grace, unto it.” Zech.4: 6,7. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.” Rev. 1:5, 6. “For thou

wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Rev.5: 9—13.

The Lord bless the remarks I have made.

Amen.

**THE END.**

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