

A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH IN GRACE

BIBLE TEXT : II Peter 1:1-21.

LESSON 454 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Peter 1:1-21

¹ Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:
² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
⁵ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
⁸ 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.
⁹ But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
¹⁰ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
¹¹ For so an entrance shall be

Bible References:

I Attaining unto a Life of Godliness

1. Peter's opening salutation is an announcement of the leading theme of growing in grace, II Peter 1:1, 2;

2 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

2. The graces of Christ's divine nature are attained through His power, II Peter 1:3, 4;

Philippians 4:13

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2. God's mathematical lesson on growing is by spiritual addition, II Peter 1:5-8;

Ephesians 4:13

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

II An Abundant Entrance into Heaven

1. Diligence is necessary to make one's calling and election sure, II Peter 1:9,10;

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

¹¹ Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:

2. An abundant entrance will be ministered to the one who thus applies himself, II Peter 1:11;

Daniel

12:3

³ And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

3. Peter, knowing his approaching end, exhorts Christians to diligence, II Peter 1:12-15;

John 21:18

¹⁸ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not.

John 21:19

¹⁹ This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

III Peter's Tribute to the Word of God

1. The events on the Mount of Transfiguration are confirmed by Peter, II Peter 1:16-18;

Matthew 16:28

²⁸ Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Matthew 17:1-8

ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

¹² Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

¹³ Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance;

¹⁴ Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

¹⁵ Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

¹⁶ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

¹⁷ For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

¹⁸ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

¹ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

⁴ Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

⁵ While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

⁶ And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

⁸ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

2. The prophecy of old concerning Jesus was confirmed by events on the Mount, II Peter 1:19;

Deuteronomy 18:15

¹⁵ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

3. Prophecy was written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost and is of no private interpretation, II Peter 1:20, 21;

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

John 16:13

¹³ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Notes:

NOTES

Holiness

A subject about which much is written and upon which much emphasis is placed is found in all the Epistles we have thus far studied, and in the Gospels too: the subject of HOLINESS "without which no man shall see the Lord." Paul, James and Peter have devoted much time and attention to instructing Christians in the way that holiness may be perfected in their lives.

In this present passage of Scripture the Apostle Peter follows it up under the theme "Growing in Grace." We do not go far into the Scriptures without seeing that if a Christian is to make spiritual headway, he must be diligent in seeking the graces manifested in the divine nature of Christ. Thus only will we approach His stature and grow in His graces. A musician must give much time and attention to his music to become a good musician. Likewise must a Christian devote himself to the task of perfecting holiness if he is to become a good Christian, or Christlike.

Precious Faith

The first chapter of II Peter opens with a salutation "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The Greek reading requires this identifying God with Christ. In much the same manner, Jesus, in speaking to Thomas in John 20:29, gave His blessing to those who had not seen Him, in saying, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The Apostle

Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:6; "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Is it any wonder that the writer calls this "precious faith"? This precious faith is through the righteousness of God, which He gives the believer.

Growth in Grace

Peter's desire for increase of grace (in which the believer lives) and peace (its fruit) is in agreement with his final exhortation to growth, in the last chapter of his Epistle. This increase is spoken of as multiplication through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. This knowledge is both doctrinal and experiential. It lies at the foundation of all true religion. The Christian growth in grace is based on the increase of knowledge and of obedience to the Word of God. (**Deuteronomy 8:3** ³ And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. **Proverbs 9:10** ¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.)

The statement, "As his divine power hath given unto us **all things** that pertain unto life and godliness" is emphatic and includes the entire scope of God's plan of salvation from justification to glorification. This also expresses inward and outward holiness in this present life and continuance and increase in spiritual life. "Through the knowledge" does not include any mystical rites or superstitious observances, but obedience to the revealed will of God in His Word (**Romans 10:17** ¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.). "Glory" refers to the glory of the Godhead and the "virtue" to His excellence and perfections. By all the attributes of His nature He called us to the blessings of the Gospel.

Divine Nature

It has been said that God's calling is His enabling. His call is not without the greatest and most precious promises known to man. They are of inestimable value and costly in price (**1 Peter 1:18-19** ¹⁸ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:). These promises were not only for the Old Testament saints, but are up-to-date, current, Gospel promises, active in the daily life of the true believer, that make it possible for him to be partaker of the divine nature, by obedience and continuance in His Word (**John 8:31** ³¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;). There is a false teaching that puts forth the theory that we all have God in us, or are part Deity, and we need to let the expression of God in us come forth. This chapter teaches us that it is only as we receive the knowledge of God and His promises into our lives that we can be partakers of the divine nature. Only by crucifying self, or the "old man" (**Romans 6:6** ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.), emptying ourselves of our own ways and ideas, can we expect the indwelling of the divine nature. When we realize the provision God has made for us, how rich is our estate! (**2 Corinthians 8:9** ⁹ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.). We escape the corruption, which is in the world through lust, by the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus. It removes the base desires, which lust

after this world, and makes us love God fervently. God's call is to purity and holiness.

Addition of Graces

Above and beyond all the foregoing things that God does and has multiplied unto us, let us do our part by adding to our faith, or attaining unto the evidence of things not seen. "Giving all diligence" implies that God does the work, yet not unless we are diligent to do our part in following God's Word. In this series of Christian graces each added one prepares for the next. It tempers and perfects that, which precedes. Faith is already in possession, but add virtue. Virtue, or Christian excellence, includes courage to do and suffer. To virtue add the knowledge of God: truth, duty and the wisdom to use them. In your knowledge have temperance, the ability to bear and forbear; sustain and abstain. Deny yourself and take up your cross daily. Christian temperance implies abstaining from pleasures, which would lead away from God. It is to use the world rightly. Intemperance is to abuse. (**2 Corinthians 10:5** ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;). Let temperance and self-control become severe, stern and austere, patience is enjoined. "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). To patience we are to add godliness, a continual sense of God's presence and trust in Him. To godliness we are to add brotherly kindness, which will seek the good of our brother. God wants us to have love that extends past our brothers to our neighbours; so, as a concluding additive, charity is included. This love of God in our hearts looks out for and embraces all mankind (I Corinthians 13).

If these graces be in us, not merely existing but growing and increasing, we shall not be inactive or slothful, but bearing fruit for the Master. He that is wanting in these graces is blind. The eyes of his understanding are closed. He cannot see God, or His pardoning love. He has lost the evidence of things not seen. He is near-sighted, having lost sight of the precious promises, perfect love, and Heaven. He cannot now see what he once enjoyed, and has forgotten what he felt when his sins were forgiven.

Calling and Election Sure

In speaking to the brethren, the Apostle admonishes that a ceaseless effort be made to be obedient to God's call to faith and holiness, and the election to a place in spiritual Israel. If we are diligent in doing what the previous verses have told us to do, we have God's assurance that we shall never fall. This teaches us that we will fall if we do not do these things. To the one who obeys, there is ministered an abundant entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom. As a faithful pastor, Peter promises to keep his congregation reminded of these things, that they may be established in the truth.

Mount of Transfiguration

Peter knew that his ministry on earth was coming to a close, that he would not be able to continue to preach and teach. He was impressing upon them the great necessity of following the teachings of Christ which he had heard from the Master Himself. This account gives us a better understanding of what took place on the Mount of Transfiguration, and how those events confirm the prophecies of the Old Testament. Peter was now saying that this Gospel and message were not the product of cunningly devised fables, as many had been in that day regarding Deity and angels. He was an eyewitness of Christ's Majesty on the Mount. He had heard God's voice say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." He had seen Moses, the representative of the Law, and Elijah, the representative of the

prophets, fade away, and Jesus standing there alone. Jesus is the One whom we should see today (Deuteronomy 18:15; Luke 16:16).

Authority of God's Word

The prophecies concerning Christ had come to pass in minute detail; and since Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration and had heard God's voice commending His Son's work on earth, this added more assurance to other prophecies not yet fulfilled, which included the return of Christ to earth (**Acts 1:11** ¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.). Those prophecies were a light in a dark place and necessary until the day dawned and "the Sun of righteousness" arose, dispelling the darkness. The Apostle warns once more of a danger that would arise through private interpretation of the prophecies of the Scriptures. The men who had written them were not secular men but holy men of God moved by the Holy Ghost. It will take the same Spirit that moved upon holy men to speak those words, to interpret them. Scripture is interpreted by Scripture and not by man's wisdom (**2 Timothy 2:15** ¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.). Would to God that there were more holy men today, dedicated to the will of God, who could be used by God to declare the unsearchable riches of His grace from His Word!

QUESTIONS

1. What does the Apostle Peter refer to here as being precious?
2. What attributes are multiplied in this chapter?
3. How are all things that pertain to life and godliness given?
4. To what are we called?
5. By what are we made partakers of the divine nature?
6. What are the seven attributes, when added to faith, that will keep us from falling?
7. In what condition is the one who lacketh these things?
8. What other reward awaits the one who adds these graces?
9. Why do we have a more sure word of prophecy?
10. Why is no prophecy of the Scripture of any private interpretation?