

Title: Good to Grow
Date: 1/12/25
Subject: Christians are to grow, grow, grow.
Scripture: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Some people think of Peter before he encountered Jesus as a rough, uneducated, outdoorsy guy who went by his gut and not by his mind. They think he couldn't put 2 words together to form a coherent thought: "Ugg. Me. Fish. Ugg."

It's true he wasn't formally trained in a rabbinic school and was an ordinary guy but he was far from intellectually and spiritually dumb. The scripture read earlier reveals a man who sounds more like an attorney or someone adept in making a logical argument. The text states a premise and continues with one thing leading to another. This sets up the theme for the passage. There's to be a growth.

The human author of the book introduces himself by using both of his names. His parents gave him the most commonly used name – Simon, meaning "he (God) has heard." The other name was given by Jesus – Peter, meaning "rock." Simon Peter states he is a servant, a slave owned by another. In his first letter he wrote about who bought him and all believers: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

He was also an apostle, in that position as Jesus Christ chose him along with 11 other men to be his first followers. There were others who were noted as being apostles. The meaning is one who has been sent by another. Jesus is the sender which means Peter humbly submits to his authority.

The receivers of the letter are identified. They're people in the same position as he and the other servant apostles. No one is superior to the others. All have received an equally precious faith which came from the same source - the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The entirety of God, all of his attributes, attitudes and behaviors are perfect, without error. Out of his righteousness he gave faith, the ability to believe, the capacity to trust in Christ for salvation. God is the one who took the initiative and reached out to people. People can't achieve right standing with God by their goodness or works. It's like someone trying to save themselves when drowning by pulling on their hair. They need someone else to reach out and grab them. We needed God to grab us.

Readers are greeted with a benediction. Confusing? Like how "aloha" is used to greet and say goodbye. You don't know if the person who meets you is trying to get rid of you right away. The apostle isn't looking to confuse anyone. He desires for the readers to experience grace and peace. Grace is unmerited favor and divine assistance. Peace is spiritual well-being and completeness that comes from Christ reconciling a person to God.

Grace and peace are to be experienced in abundance. There's more to learn about the magnitude of God's love. There's more to be experienced in how he impacts our lives.

The abundance of grace and peace is made possible through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. The more we know of God and Jesus (growth), the more grace and peace we'll possess (growth). Knowledge - not surface level like students who skim the assigned material hoping they'll gain enough information to pass the test. It's an experiential and applied knowledge. It's like the person who reads books on how to swim and then gets in the pool. Then the person reads about the different kind of strokes and takes lessons and gets back in the pool. More information and more application. Brian McDowell, "Its not just about knowing He is your Father but allowing Him to Father you!"

God provides everything the Christian needs. V. 3

How accurately do people use the word "everything"? Does everything really mean everything? A worker laments to his friend, "Everything went wrong on the job!" Did they run out of material, run out of water, the electricity didn't work, the heat didn't work, nobody was there to work, the bank foreclosed?

Everything usually means most, the majority or quite a bit. The child who is told to eat everything on his plate isn't expected to lick the plate and the table to make sure he got all the crumbs that fell off the plate. Everything doesn't even mean needing to get the last sprig of broccoli.

It's completely different with God. With him, everything means everything. It's not just an abundance that he's provided and made available to us, he's provided everything of what's needed. There's not some detail he forgot. There's not some provision he overlooked. He hasn't left out some truth. No need to go window shopping for a cute little something to augment our beliefs.

It's like the fertilized egg in the mother's womb. It has all the DNA it will ever possess but it's just the beginning of the journey. There's a lot more ahead - development in womb, birth. The baby may think it's arrived but there's still a lot more ahead - childhood, adolescence, teen years, adulthood.

God's given everything we need for life, eternal and spiritual. We had been dead in our trespasses and sin but now are truly alive. God's given everything we need for godliness - right living, Christ-like life. Some of the specifics are sonship, right relationship with him, wisdom, love, hope, spiritual fruit, victory over sin, Holy Spirit, heart change, his word, access to his throne. He provides according to his unlimited divine power.

God's provisions are available to us because of the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Glory - the excellence, majesty and beauty of who God is in his being, his attributes and essence. Goodness - the working out of God's attributes, the excellence of his perfect actions, works, deeds, behaviors.

v. 4 is restatement of v. 3 but with additions. Through these, referencing God's glory and goodness in V. 3, he has given us very great and precious promises, ones that are wonderful, magnificent, supremely valuable. They are God's publicly declared commitments to those who place their trust in him.

What are some of the very great and precious promises? Besides what was mentioned as to God gives for life and godliness - forgiveness of sins, coheirs with Jesus Christ, heaven, no longer held guilty of rebellion against God, Jesus Christ is coming back to reward those who've placed their trust in him and to punish the wicked who have not placed their trust in him

Having the promises isn't an end in itself. We're not just holding on to a bunch of IOU's. They're leading to something. There is purpose to what God gives – through these...

The first purpose is that we may participate in the divine nature. This doesn't mean we'll become part of God or mini-gods. It means fellowship, sharing, participation. We've become connected to the one who is divine. We've been given eternal life and the capacity to enjoy God and what he has. We've been born again, born from above, born of God (1 Jn 5:1). We've been adopted as his sons (Eph 1:5). We're Gods children's (Jn 1:12). We're created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24).

God shares his attributes. We don't have them to the extent he does. For instance, God is everywhere present, but we are only present in one place at a time. God is love. We are loving. God has life in and of himself. We have life because God has graciously given it to us.

The second purpose is to be able to escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Many translations state this as something that has happened – having escaped. We've been liberated from the moral corruption, decay and destruction caused by sin. We're no longer bound by sin. We're free from it. It's up to us to live like it.

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?... But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness... But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life... Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 6:1, 2, 17, 18, 22; 8:1, 2).

Someone's translation of vv. 3 and 4: “God has granted to us everything we need for life and godliness through knowing Christ and trusting in his all-sufficient promises.”

v. 5. For this very reason. Based on what God has provided in verses 3 and 4, certain things are to happen. It's talking about walking in salvation, spiritual growth.

“Because of our new birth and the precious promises and divine power offered us in Christ we cannot sit back and rest content with ‘faith’...The grace of God demands, as it enables, diligence or ‘effort’ in man...not the unaided product of human effort, but the fruit of our being partakers of the divine nature...Human effort is indispensable, even though it is inadequate” (Tyndale Comm, Michael Green, p. 66).

Salvation, the initial experience of it, isn't the goal of the Christian life. It's the starting point. We are to become more Christ-like.

To that end, we're to make every effort. We'll see this phrase again toward the end of the book. The phrase originates from the world of theater. Benefactors competed to see who could be the most generous and

extravagant. They'd lavishly provide money for actors, training, costumes, whatever was needed. They eagerly worked to ensure that their play would be the one to catch people's attention.

I'm not sure if you want to think of Christians or the church body as a theatrical production, a movie or a TV show. The idea is that we are to lavishly provide and supply, furnish abundantly, eagerly work on this enterprise of growing in the Christian faith. It isn't a situation where we can just sit back and relax. We're to cooperate with God in producing a Christian life that's a credit to him

Berean Study Bible: "The Greek word "σπουδῆν" (spoudēn) conveys a sense of diligence, eagerness, and earnestness. It implies that spiritual growth requires intentional and vigorous effort. This is not a passive process but an active pursuit, reflecting the believer's commitment to living out their faith. Historically, this reflects the early Christian understanding that faith is not static but dynamic, requiring continuous dedication."

Other scriptures speak of the approach we're to have: "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1); "We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I also labor, striving with all His energy working powerfully within me" (Col 1:28, 29); "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way as to take the prize. Everyone who competes in the games trains with strict discipline. They do it for a crown that is perishable, but we do it for a crown that is imperishable. Therefore I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight like I am beating the air. No, I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:24-27); "let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:1-4).

Christianity was described by a detractor as an initial spasm followed by chronic inertia. Sometimes it's all too true. A person comes to Jesus as Savior, is excited, has a voracious appetite for reading the Bible, can't wait to get together with other believers to study God's word and pray. As time goes by, he finds he doesn't have the same thrill and time to do those things. He barely reads the Bible and prays less often. Sometimes the person is convicted and returns to do the things he did at first. More often than not, the person decides that this is the way things go in the Christian life. He becomes a spiritual couch potato. Whatever spiritual muscle he did have soon becomes flab.

We're to keep on keeping on. We're to be continual mountain climbers. We're to strenuously work on the spiritual life God has given us.

Make every effort to what? Add to your faith. There are various ways faith is used in the Bible. Here it's being in a right relationship with Christ. Michael Green described it as "an initial acceptance of the love of God in response to his gracious willingness to receive us." It's already present in the person who has placed their trust in Christ. He has a faith foundation upon which to build.

What are we to add? Goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. We're going to treat these as a whole, as the raw material to be used for building our spiritual lives. Later you can read the back of the sermon notes where these are further described.

How do we add them? The short answer and the long answer are the same answer – be diligent students of God's word who put into practice what we learn. Don't be hearers only, but doers (James 1:22).

v. 8. the promise of success. We shouldn't think of success as a business making 50% profit, your favorite team winning the championship, graduating as a super valedictorian. The success God is interested in isn't of the earthly variety.

Success is: if we possess these qualities in increasing measure, they'll keep us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We won't be useless and unfruitful but will be effective and productive. It's not merely that we possess these qualities but that we have them in increasing measure. We will be being transformed into being like Christ in his love for the Father, love for others, obedience, character and behavior.

v. 9. If anyone doesn't have these qualities. He's nearsighted and blind. A person can't be both at the same time. Therefore, it seems like Peter is talking about a person who closes his eyes. He can't see the truth or reality. He is spiritually weak.

He's forgotten that he's been cleansed from his past sins. The person still has been cleansed, but he doesn't think about it. He doesn't live like it. He's wandering around in the dark thinking that he's dirty. He's immature, maybe mired in guilt, clinging to the basics and maybe not even that.

He is ineffective and unproductive. He's like a field that produces a puny crop because little was planted. He's like a factory that doesn't succeed because it has 10% of the needed workers. It's like a team that doesn't score because only 3 of 11 players go on the field.

The proscribed approach is in v. 10 - be all the more eager. This is similar to v. 5 - make every effort. Be excited and invested into making our calling and election sure. Show some life as actively build on the foundation of our salvation, to live it out.

Fulfilling our Christian responsibility of making our calling and election sure leads to two things. The first is the guarantee from God that we'll never fall. This doesn't mean we'll never sin. It doesn't mean we'll never have a problem. It doesn't mean we'll never doubt. It means our lives will be solidly anchored to the rock Jesus Christ that can't be moved.

The second promise is we'll receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It'll be better than walking on the red carpet where photographers snap our picture and adoring fans applaud while they point at us and go "Oooohh" and "Ahh." I know that's all of your dreams, right?

It'll be a stroll on gold streets. Someone, the most important being in the universe, will say "Well done, good and faithful servant." He's pleased because we've taken advantage of what he's provided for life and godliness, made every effort to add to our faith in him, been effective and productive in our knowledge of him.