

2 Peter 1:3-4

The Fundamentals of Growth

Before Peter begins to discuss the specifics of spiritual growth, he lays some very important theological groundwork in 2 Peter 1:3-4. God has called all Christians to reject self-righteousness and to let God work in us to make us what He wants us to be. We can grow in grace, but we must grow God's way to else God will not get the glory that He should get from our lives.

I. The _____ to Grow (2 Peter 1:3a)

- We can only grow through the _____ of God.
- We are entirely dependent on our vital connection with the Savior for spiritual growth and _____ living. (*John 15:4; Matthew 6:27*)
- God has given us everything we need to grow. He has given us “all things” in _____ so that we do not lack anything that we need. (*Romans 8:32; Colossians 2:9-10*)
- The Christian life feels like a puzzle sometimes, and the wonderful truth is that God has given us in Jesus all the _____ we need. (*Galatians 2:20*)

II. The _____ to Glory (2 Peter 1:3b)

- God has called us to live _____ lives for His glory and that happen as we learn more and more about God. (*2 Peter 3:18*)
- Do not let the _____ things of God discourage you from getting to know what you can about Him. (*Isaiah 55:8-9*)
- Glorifying God by _____ Him better should be the chief ambition of our life. (*Jeremiah 9:23-24; Philippians 3:8-10*)
- All of our _____ and thoughts are determined by what we know and believe about God. (*John 17:3*)

III. The _____ of God (2 Peter 1:4)

- God is _____ to keep all His promises and He is _____ to make a promise that He will not keep. (*Titus 1:2*)
- God has promised to always be with us. He is always _____ so that we might know him better. (*Deuteronomy 31:6*)
- God has promised to make Himself _____ to us. (*1 John 5:20*)
- God has promised to _____ us into the truth. (*John 14:26*)
- If God has kept His promise about _____, and He has, then we can know that He will keep all his other promises. (*2 Timothy 1:12*)

Conclusion

How is it possible for us to grow in grace? It is possible because God has given us the capability, the calling, and the covenants that make it possible. Spiritual growth is not a work we accomplish on our own. It is God's work done in us. We must _____ on God for all that we need to grow in grace.

2 Peter 1:3-4

The Fundamentals of Growth

Pastor Peter had a burden to see believers grow and become mature. His second epistle was written specifically to encourage Christians to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, while warning them that there were those who would corrupt their faith and hinder their growth.

Before Peter begins to discuss the specifics of spiritual growth, he lays some very important theological groundwork in 2 Peter 1:3-4. Such an important topic requires one crucial, foundational understanding. Spiritual growth cannot be accomplished with God's help. The kind of "spirituality" that is achieved independent of God is, by definition, self-righteousness. This is the kind of religion that Jesus warned against, when He said, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

God has called all Christians to reject self-righteousness and to let God work in us to make us what He wants us to be. We can grow in grace, but we must grow God's way to else God will not get the glory that He should get from our lives.

I. The Capability to Grow

2 Peter 1:3a According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...

There are some spiritual truths that we must understand to be able to grow in grace as God intends. The first and most important truth is this: we can only grow through the power of God. It is God's "divine power" that has "given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. We cannot make ourselves grow anymore than we could give ourselves spiritual life. We are totally dependent on God.

The temptation we all face is to be DIY Christians. We like to think that we can achieve spiritual maturity through our own effort and discipline, or our own intelligence and study. There is no such thing as a Christ-like do-it-yourself Christian. The work of spiritual growth is a work that God does in us as we submit to Him. In John 15, Jesus used the illustration of a vine and its branches to help us grasp this truth.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

We are entirely dependent on our vital connection with the Savior for spiritual growth and fruitful living. In some ways, our spiritual growth is similar to our physical growth. In Matthew 6:27, Jesus asked, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" The answer is, "No one can." If we cannot make ourselves grow physically taller by our own efforts, why would we think we can make ourselves more mature through self centered thinking about behavior?

On the one hand we must recognize that without God's power we cannot grow. But on the other hand we have the glorious truth that we God has given us everything we need to grow. He has given us "all things" in Christ so that we do not lack anything that we need. There will be times when you feel like you are missing something in your Christian life. At those times, you need to remind yourself that if you have Jesus, then you have everything you need.

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Colossians 2:9-10 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. [10] And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Few things are as frustrating as trying to complete a puzzle and not having all the pieces. The Christian life feels like a puzzle sometimes, and the wonderful truth is that God has given us in Jesus all the pieces we need. We must learn to acknowledge that truth when we are frustrated and discouraged and choose to believe that we do have what we need, and it is just a matter of letting God take us through the process of putting those pieces together to form the perfect picture of Christ in our lives. That's the essence of what Paul called living "by the faith of the son of God."

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

II. The Calling to Glory

2 Peter 1:3b ...through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

The concept of Christian growth and maturity can seem vague to us. When we understand that growth is connected to learning, we begin to get a clearer picture of growth. We grow spiritually as we get to know God better. God has called us to live virtuous lives for His glory and that happen as we learn more and more about God. Our growth comes "through the knowledge of Him." It is with this theme that Peter begins and ends this second epistle of his.

2 Peter 3:18 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.

But how can we know an infinite God? It is true that we cannot know everything there is to know about God, so some might think, "Why even try?" We should strive to know God better, not because we hope to learn everything about Him, but because we can know everything that God wants us to know about Him. There will always be things about God we do not understand, but do not let the unknown things of God discourage you from getting to know what you can about Him.

In music, there are pitches that are too high for humans to hear and too low for humans to hear. Those pitches are real nonetheless. You can measure them with scientific equipment, even if you cannot perceive them with your ears. The same is true about God. There are things about Him that are beyond our ability to comprehend.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

There are truths about God that we will never be able to fully understand until we get to heaven. But instead of getting discouraged because we cannot know everything, we should be encouraged that we can know some things about such an awesome and infinite God.

Glorifying God by knowing Him better should be the chief ambition of our life. Anything else we could accomplish pales in comparison to known God. It is the highest achievement.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: [24] But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

The Apostle Paul understood the importance of knowing God better. He said that he counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [his] Lord." He was willing to

give up everything so that he could “know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.” (Philippians 3:8-10)

Knowing God is so essential to the Christian life, that Jesus said that the meaning of eternal life was summed in knowing God.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Knowing God better and better is what being a Christian is really all about. All of our behaviors and thoughts are determined by what we know and believe about God.

III. The Covenants of God

2 Peter 1:4 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.

With the calling to glory and virtue comes the promises of God that make it possible for us to take our place in God’s plan of demonstrating His divine nature in us, thus fulfilling our calling. The power to change comes from God and the promises come from God as well. God is a promise maker and a promise keeper. God is able to keep all His promises and He is unable to make a promise that He will not keep.

Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

They are exceeding great promises in that they are large and significant. They are precious promises because they are of eternal value. What sort of promises has God given that pertain to our growth in grace and knowledge? Here are few to consider.

First, God has promised to always be with us. This promise assures us that the One we are getting to know is never far away. He is always close so that we might know him better.

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

God has promised to make Himself known to us. If God did not promise to reveal Himself, we could not know Him. He is so far above us that we would never be able to understand him. But God has made Himself known to us through God the Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:20 And 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.

God has promised to guide us into the truth. We are not left to our own devices to try and discover for ourselves the truth about God. He has given us the Scripture and the Holy Spirit to be our instructors.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

There are many more promises that we could discuss, but the greatest and most precious promise that we have been given is the promise of salvation. Peter reminds us of that promise when he says that we have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Note the contrast between the glory and virtue that we have been called to and the corruption that we have been rescued from. We only have to look briefly at the world around us and see what this corruption looks like. The lust of the world is paraded before us every day. Living according to

those lusts lead to disgusting and vile behavior that violates the God-given conscience and all natural norms.

If you are a Christian, then you are already saved. There is a real sense in which we are not waiting to be rescued from this wicked world but we have already been delivered from it. We have escaped the corruption. And it is because God has rescued us from sin that it is even possible for us to know God.

If God has kept His promise about salvation, and He has, then we can know that He will keep all his other promises. There should be not doubt in our mind, and the certainty of God's promises should encourage us to want to know God better.

2 Timothy 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Conclusion

How is it possible for us to grow in grace? It is possible because God has given us the capability, the calling, and the covenants that make it possible. Spiritual growth is not a work we accomplish on our own. It is God's work done in us. We must rely on God for all that we need to grow in grace.