

67. GROW IN GRACE

“But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”
II Peter 3:18.

Aim: To give some general instructions to young Christians as to how to grow in grace, be strong in the Lord and to avoid backsliding.

Introduction:

To grow as a Christian one must:

- a) Methodically - Study and obey the Bible, Pray, Obey God, attend Church, and Do Soul Winning.
- b) Cultivate Spiritual Graces and a quality Christlike lifestyle.

Let us see some things that the Holy Spirit wants to cultivate in our lives and check if we are listening to Him and acting on His voice.

I. “GROWING IN GRACE” DEFINED

Grace is used in two senses: a) in GOD - it is undeserved favour.
b) in MEN - it is holiness.

Therefore, to grow in grace is to grow in holiness, to be more like God, to govern our conduct more and more by the same principles that God does.

God wants to glorify Himself and to fill the Universe with holiness and happiness.

Growing in grace is not gradually giving up sin. We must, at salvation, give up sin instantly and wholly.

II. HOW TO GROW IN GRACE

- 1) Be saved and love Jesus Christ with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. (Matthew 22:35-40).
- 2) Repent of all known sin.
- 3) Make a full surrender and consecration to God of everything we are, have, desire and love.
- 4) An intense desire to learn more of God's Ways through the Holy Spirit's leading.
- 5) Keep up with our convictions of duty and with our growing knowledge of God's will. (John 14:15).
- 6) An increasing and confident faith in God's character so that we'll trust him in the dark as well as in the light, whether we understand why or why not He deals such with us. (John 10:27 like sheep).
- 7) A deeper personal acquaintance with Christ. (John 14:21).
Christ has promised to manifest himself personally to those who love and obey him.
- 8) Watch against besetting sins such as levity (foolishness). Hebrews 12:1.
If you yield to temptation once, its easier to yield again.
- 9) Censoriousness. - Young Christians begin full of zeal and are soon amazed at the coldness and apathy of many churches or Christians. They are likely to say critical things against them.
Be careful about what you say to and about other Christians, even though it may be true.
- 10) Pride - thinking that you are greater than other people.
“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” I Corinthians 10:12.

- 11) Anger and Temper with workmates, neighbours, the government or events.
“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking be put away....” Ephesians 4:31.
- 12) Selfishness - don't act from selfish motives. Think of what God wants first, then put others second.
- 13) Sloth and Laziness - How many young Christians stop and decline by laziness, as if there was no work to do. Proverbs 6:6-11.
- 14) Envy - If you see others going ahead of you in prosperity, in influence, in talents and in the Lord's work, examine your feelings and see if it pleases you. If the sight gives you pain, beware!
- 15) Impure Thoughts. Make a covenant with your eyes, ears and all your senses, or they'll prove the inlet of temptation and sin. If you find yourself in danger, turn your thoughts away instantly and think of something else, such as Scripture, people's needs, or Christ's example.
- 16) Maintain great firmness of purpose and decision of character to be undeviating in the performance of secret duties (prayer and Bible) and in obeying the truth no matter what others may say or think (I Corinthians 15:58).
- 17) Meekness is patience under injuries. When you are reviled, learn not to revile again. If persecuted, don't threaten back. I Peter 2:21-23.

III. PROOF OF GROWTH IN GRACE

What will a Christian be like when he is growing in grace?

- 1) He does things, less because he feels like it, and more because it is right.
For example, “I don't feel like praying” - do it anyhow; “I don't feel like church” - do it anyhow.
- 2) More love to God resulting in a growing veneration for all the commands of God.
“Lord what would thou have me to do?” Acts 9:6.
“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Proverbs 9:10.
- 3) More love to men. As young Christians grow in Godliness, they feel more and more a desire that all the world should be converted to God. They have more heart-breaking agony at the dreadful state of men in their sins. I Samuel 17:45-47.
- 4) They have greater humility and self abasement. James 4:10; I Peter 5:5,6; Isaiah 66:2.
- 5) An increased abhorrence of sin, feeling less disposed to compromise with sin.
“Ye that love the Lord hate evil.” Psalm 97:10.
- 6) Less love for the world. I John 2:15,17.
He seeks wealth and honour only to glorify God, and of doing good to men.
He is less desirous of worldly company and carnal conversation. He will love to read the most spiritual books and will love the company and conversation of the most spiritual Christians.
He will love attending the most pungent, and searching spiritual preaching.
- 7) An increased delight in fellowship with saints. I John 3:14.
- 8) He finds it more easy to exercise a forgiving spirit and to pray for his enemies. He easily gets over injuries. “Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32.
- 9) He becomes more ready to bestow property, being willing to give all that is in his power to extend Christ's Kingdom. Luke 6:38.
- 10) His time, talents, property and life itself have value only in relation to Christ's kingdom and eternity. Matthew 6:19-21. He lives by eternal values.
- 11) He is more willing to confess faults to men. Matthew 5:23,24.

- 12) He regards less and less either the good or bad opinions of men and is less influenced by what "other people say" and popular opinion.
- 13) He will expect frequent and agonising conflicts with Satan.
Spiritual Christians are doing Satan a vast injury and therefore he sets himself against them.
"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His Might." Ephesians 6:10.
- 14) A growing peacefulness under sudden and crushing disasters.
"Love, joy, peace" Galatians 5:22. "He is our peace". Ephesians 2:14.
- 15) A growing realisation and confidence in the wisdom, goodness and providence of God.
He develops a state of mind that sees God's hand in everything. Romans 8:28.
- 16) A growing jealousy for:-
 - a) the honour of God.
 - b) the purity and honour of His Church.
 - c) the rights of God and all men. "Is there not a cause?"
1 Samuel 17:29.

IV. EVIDENCES OF BACKSLIDING

How do you detect backsliding in yourself or another?

1. Being weary of giving money or time to promote the kingdom of Christ.
2. Stops coming to church.
3. Reluctant to converse on spiritual matters. Young Christians delight to discuss spiritual issues.
If you leave your first love, watch out.
4. Less interest in private and public prayer, Bible reading and drawing nearer to God.
5. More delight in public meetings than in secret communion with God.
6. If you find yourself growing very much critical and afraid of the measures that good men pursue (and that God blesses) for promoting revivals, you are backsliding.
For example, people (Christians?) come here and say that we are too pushy, yet they never, ever lead a person to Christ. They are usually backsliders from a backslidden church.

V. HOW TO ESCAPE FROM BACKSLIDING

Backsliding is very hard to recover from because you resist what other Christians say and you avoid meeting with other Christians. The solution to recover from backsliding is:

1. ADMIT that you are backsliding.
2. APPLY and take God's REMEDY for your sin.
3. FIND your CAUSE of backsliding and give it up. God will hold you at arms-length and will frown upon you when you pray unless you search out and remove the cause of backsliding. Give up your idols.
4. Apply to the Lord Jesus Christ for PARDON and peace with God, as a guilty sinner.
Confess your sins fully, forsake them, return to God, and
He will have mercy on you. He will heal your backslidings & will remember your iniquities no more.
Backsliding is why revivals cease.

VI. SOME THINGS WHICH SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS

Aim: To know how to help and teach young Christians. "Feed my lambs." John 21:15.

Introduction: Why do Christians backslide? Because they aren't being fed or taught Bible doctrine and are not applying it to their lives. **What ought to be taught?**

TOPICS:

1. Basics such as "What all Christians must know".
2. Soul Winning - How to lead people to Christ.
3. Apologetics - Answers to common objections met in Soul Winning.
4. How we know the Bible is true.
5. Second Coming of Christ.
6. Fundamentals of Bible Doctrine.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

1. **Attending Church is Raising a Standard against the Devil.**

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall raise up a standard against him." Isaiah 59:19.

Today as the tide of evil increases, there is a greater than ever need for God's people to pull together by joining a sound church immediately they are saved. **DON'T WAIT!**

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

Hebrews 10:24,25.

If you set out in your Christian life by waiting, most likely you will always be waiting and never do anything to much purpose. Never wait when God has pointed out your duty.

"The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". 1 Timothy 3:15.

Usually a young Christian's character through life is moulded according to how they are dealt with when first converted. When they are first brought in, their minds are soft and tender, and easily yield to the truth. They may then be taught easily. If you don't disciple them immediately, they'll be harder to disciple later on.

2. However dull your feelings may be, **if duty calls, DO IT.**

Distinguish between emotion and principle in your Christian thinking.

Do it because it is right. Don't wait until you feel like it.

KNOW, RECKON, and YIELD your members to God. Romans 6:6,11,13.

3. Teach them to cultivate a tender conscience. 1 Timothy 1:5,19. Don't resist your conscience. When they see a "Thus saith the Lord", they'll be always ready to obey it, come what may.
4. **"YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN"**. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20. Know that all your time, property, influence, faculties, body and soul belong to God. When you submitted to God, you made a full surrender of all to Him. If you don't do this, don't call yourself a Christian, because the very idea of a Christian is to renounce self, and become entirely consecrated to God.
"Purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:14.
5. Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
Keep a watch over your minds and be all the time in a prayerful spirit. Pray always or you'll get far from God. When your conscience presses you, go to Christ, confess your sin fully, and pour your heart out to God. The Holy Spirit will lead you in prayer and the dark clouds of guilt will go away.
6. **Don't adopt a false standard** in your Christian life. Don't keep older Christians as a standard of holy living, but always look at Christ as your model. "Looking unto Jesus." Hebrews 12:2.
Aim at being HOLY and don't be satisfied until you are as perfect as God.
7. **Don't aim at comfort**, but at usefulness in your Christian life.
Don't spend your time in seeking to be happy or on a spiritual high, but spend time in agonising prayer for sinners and in pulling people out of the fire. Consider how the

apostles travailed for souls and laboured in weariness, painfulness and in death to save sinners. Don't calculate on a life of joy and triumph. You may be called on to go through fiery trials.

- a) Seek to go forward and be useful, not happy;
 - b) Talk about duty, not comfort;
 - c) Talk about triumph, not flights of joy;
 - d) Seek for righteousness, not entertainment; and
 - e) Seek how to know the will of God and do it. You'll be happy enough in heaven.
8. You must **learn to say NO to wrong activities of old friends**. If you go with them once, it will be easier to go with them again, then you'll start to backslide. Learn to resist the beginnings of temptation. "Be sober, be vigilant." I Peter 5:8,9.
9. **Be Strictly Honest**. "Let us walk honest, as in the day." Roman 13:13.
Be straight in everything, so that God's pure eyes can see that your mind is perfectly upright.
"Whatsoever things are honest." Phillippians 4:8. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." I Peter 2:12.
10. Christianity is not high flights of feeling, but **obedience to God** from the heart, and voluntary submission to his will.
11. Christianity is **SELF DENIAL**. Mark 8:34-37; Matthew 16:27.
a) Christ exercised Self Denial to save sinners.
b) The Father exercised Self Denial in giving His Son and in sparing us.
c) The Holy Spirit exercises Self Denial in striving with unholy men to bring us to God.
d) Angels exercise Self Denial in watching over the world.
e) The Apostles exercised Self Denial in planting Christianity among many nations. Is it too much for us to exercise some self-denial daily for Christ, the gospel & to build this church?
12. Be **temperate** (self controlled) in all things.
13. Show just as much Christianity, holiness and sincerity in all your **daily activities** as on Sunday.
14. **Aim at being perfect**.
Live entirely to God and obey all His Commandments. Sin should be the exception to our lives. Be as holy as God, and seek not to sin at all. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." I Peter 1:16.
15. **Exhibit your light** to the world or it will go out.
God won't go to the trouble of keeping a light burning that is hidden. You'll backslide. God may put you on the shelf. (1Corinthians 9:27). "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16.
16. **They should be taught HOW to win souls for Christ**. Live for this as the great purpose of life. The reason why we are left in the world is to pull sinners out of the fire. If you don't do this you are better off dead. Teach this immediately they are saved. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." 1 Corinthians 9:16.

VII. SOME EVILS OF DEFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

1. If not fully taught, they'll never be fully grounded in right principles.
2. If rightly taught, they'll take the right side on all great issues that come to the church. You can depend on them and the church will be stronger.
3. If they are not well taught, they will inevitably backslide and disgrace Christ.

VIII. HOW YOUNG CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE TREATED BY THE CHURCH

1. Older Christians ought to greatly help and teach younger Christians. If you don't teach them, they'll never grow.
2. Put young Christians to work in the church. Keep them looking to God. We are saved to serve.
3. They should be watched over by the church and warned of their dangers. Young Christians don't know the dangers that surround them, such as:
 - a) the devices of satan.
 - b) the temptations of the world.
 - c) the power of their own passions and faults.If not properly watched and warned, they will run right into danger.
4. Be tender in reprovng them. Don't be severe. They are easily thrown down. They are like a child starting to walk.

CONCLUSION and CHALLENGE

1. If churches had properly trained young Christians, the world would have been converted long ago.
2. They should be trained to work for Christ, just as carefully as young soldiers are trained for war.
3. Train young Christians to be intelligent, single hearted, self-denying, working Christians. Train them: - how to pray.
 - how to talk to people about their souls,
 - how to win souls to Christ, and
 - how to disciple people.
4. If you want to get involved training someone, let me know.
Pray now surrendering yourself to God concerning all these issues.