

That None May Perish

Reading: 2 Peter 3:1-18

Key verse: v18 ... *“but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.*

Context:

- The **imminent coming of the day of God** when the heavens and the earth and all unrighteousness will be destroyed and a new heavens and earth, in which righteousness dwells, will be established. (No more sin, sickness, sorrow or pain – just righteousness, peace and joy forever more).
- v 9 – the only thing delaying the coming of this day is the Lord’s patience towards the unrighteous, the unbelievers, because it **is not His will that any should perish**, but that **all** should come to repentance and salvation. (Christ died for all. He gave His life that whoever will may come to Him. Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life).
- v10, 11 – that through our holy conduct and godliness, by living the Christ life, we can influence the hastening of the coming of that day, because the only way the unbelievers are going to see Jesus and turn to Him and be saved is as they see Him in our lives and witness.

Our Focus – Growth in Christ:

Keeping the context in mind let’s focus on our key text:

v 18 ... *“but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.*

Our attention is drawn to the word **“grow”**. Why is **growth** important and what does the Word have to say on this topic?

In the natural and in the spiritual, if we follow the normal growth pattern, we will go through four stages in our growth.

- We start as babies, we will call this the **“baby”** stage
- Then advance to being little children, we call this the **“little children”** stage
- Following this we become young men or women, we call this the **“young men”** stage
- Finally we reach maturity as fathers and mothers, we refer to this as the **“fathers”** stage

Let’s examine each of these stages and see why it is important that we continue to **grow** until we reach maturity.

This will tell us why we are encouraged by Peter to:

... *“**grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.*

1. Babies:

1 Cor 3:1-3 ... *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to **babes** in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”*

Babies are self focused. They only think about themselves, their needs and their comfort. Whenever they want something they make a fuss and if they don't get what they want right when they want it they make an even bigger fuss. They don't like being denied their wants.

Their feelings are easily hurt and they are often jealous. Babies cry instead of singing. When a baby tries to talk they don't make much sense. Babies live to be served – and they never serve. They drink milk and cannot digest strong meat.

These are the characteristics of many believers who have been born again but failed to grow and develop spiritually. They are spiritual babies – they are carnal Christians.

Heb 5:12-14 ... *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a **babe**. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil”.*

1 Pet 2:2, 5, 9 ... *“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn **babies**, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” ...*

Starting as a baby is not wrong, it is when fail to take in the word and grow that the problem arises. You would never have a baby run your business. Babies don't reproduce. Why must we grow? ... because ...

(v5) ... “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” ...
(v9) ... “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light”.

2. Little children:

1 John 2:12-17 (read)

John talks about little children, young men and fathers. Right now we're looking at the characteristics of little children.

Some believers grow out of the baby stage and move on into the little children stage, but then fail to grow any further.

Little children who are growing and learning can be pleasant but those that are stagnant display other characteristics. They, like the babies, are very much self centred and self focused.

They only like to do the things they enjoy doing and don't relish work or having to do things for others. They love being the centre of attention and will push others aside in order to get attention. They are not always honest. They tell tales, they can be envious and unkind. If they are rebuked or disciplined they more often than not put on the sulks, become resentful and make a big scene. They storm out and won't talk to anyone and put on the big martyr syndrome. They frequently have emotional outbursts. They tend to gossip picking up partial stories they hear from the adults' conversations. They will take love and attention from wherever they can get it. They love to boast about their achievements and love praise. Little children always want the latest toy or fad.

John says of the little children that, ... *"you know the Father"*. They know who to go to when they want something. But they generally only go to the Father when they want something.

Gal 4:3 ... *"So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world"*.

1 John 5:21 ... *"Little children, guard yourselves from idols"*.

Eph 4:14-16 ... *"As a result, we are **no longer to be children**, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up** in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the **proper working of each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love"*.

3. Young Men:

Some believers then go on to the next stage of spiritual maturity, the young men stage. John also speaks about "young men".

1 John 2:13, 14 ... *"I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one"...*
... *"I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one"*.

The young man is strong in the word and knows how to overcome the enemy. He is focused on governing. He likes having and using power. He has heeded Paul's words in 1 Cor 13:11 and has ... *"done away with childish things"*.

The young man is way more mature than the child and he had vision and goals and has the faith to get where he is going. While he is more considerate of others, he doesn't like to be held back from his

exploits. He likes to have his own way and patience is a grace yet being developed in him. He likes action and his focus is still more on “doing” than on “being”.

Being strong in the word he has a good foundation to move on to the next stage in maturity:

4. Fathers:

This final stage must be the goal of all believers.

John says, ... *“I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning”*.

What John is saying here is that fathers know and understand the heavenly Father and His eternal plan and purpose that He established before the foundation of the world. They know why God has placed us here and what He has purposed for us to be and to do on His behalf. They are seated with Him in heavenly places and are looking through the heavenly Father’s eternal eyes. Their concern is for others and not for themselves. They live to bless and share the life they have in Christ with those in need.

They know Christ is their strength, their peace, their life, their joy. They know that

Rom 8:28 ... *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”*.

The fathers have learned, like Paul, to be content in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

They know that

Phil 4:7 ... *“the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”*.

Fathers know that

1 Cor 13:4-8 ... *“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; love does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails”*.

Fathers know that

Eph 2:10 ... *“we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”*.

Fathers know that

Gal 2:20 ... *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives 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 up for me”*.

And that

Phil 1:21 ... *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain".*

And finally, fathers know that

John 12:24 ... *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit".*

And they concur with Paul in his words to the Thessalonians:

1 Thess 2:19 ... *"For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?"*

They know the heavenly Father rejoices over sinners coming to salvation and that their purpose is to express Him – to be and to represent Christ to the lost and dying world.

They know that

2 Pet 3:9 ... *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance".*

Conclusion:

The Lord's return is imminent. The fields are white unto harvest. The Lord does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance and salvation.

The challenge is presented to us. Will we give attention to ...

... ***"growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"***

Will we submit ourselves to the Word and to the Holy Spirit day by day so that He can teach us Christ and so that we put on Christ and come to maturity. So we can be mature representatives of the Father; His ambassadors; Living and expressing the Christ life to those around us so that they, through our example and witness, may know the unconditional love and acceptance of Christ and turn to Him for salvation.

My encouragement and exhortation to each one of us here is that right now, and when we go from here, that we should quieten ourselves before the Father and ask the question of ourselves before Him;

What stage of spiritual growth am I in and have I stagnated in that stage? Am I a ...

- Babe – considering only my needs and my well-being
- Little child – sulking whenever I don't get my way and only doing what I like doing
- Young man – happy so long as I am in control and achieving my goals and aspirations
- Father – a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared for every good work.

While we examine ourselves we must also remember that no stage on the path to maturity is to be despised or looked down upon. We all start as babes in Christ and develop from there:

- ... a beautiful baby can bring encouragement to onlookers as they marvel in the handiwork of the Creator. All that is asked of the new born believer is that we let the beauty of Jesus be seen in us. You may not know much or be able to communicate the word very well, but you can smile and share Christ's love.
- ... an obedient and helpful child can bring encouragement and hope to those around him or her. All our heavenly Father asks is that His children obey Him and prove to be doers of His word.
- ... a faithful and diligent young man can bring encouragement to those he helps. The important thing is that ... "in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe" (1 Tim 4:12)...
- ... so we see that the life and love of Christ coming out of believers of all stages of spiritual maturity may result in a non-believer coming to see and know Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Obviously this increases as we grow and come to maturity.

The problem comes when we stagnate in one of these stages, being more focused on ourselves and not caring about others, especially the unsaved.

Prayer:

As you bow your head before the Lord and begin to examine the state of your life before Him (no one can judge you and no one wants to judge you in this matter, this is between you and the Father):

- if you realize you have stagnated and want to move onwards on the path of growth and maturity
- if you want to ask the Father for forgiveness for being more interested in yourself than others and for not giving attention to His word and to prayer as much as you should have
- if your heart's desire is to ... *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* and you want to ask the Holy Spirit to help you learn Christ and to put on Christ
- if your desire is to be a vessel for honour sanctified, useful to the master, prepared for every good work; willing to let Christ live His life through you in your world

Then pray and commit your ways unto the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to come to maturity in Christ, so that His life may flow out of you and be seen in all you say and do, so that you may be light in dark places and bring hope to the lost.

Those of you who are content that you are on the path of learning and growth in the knowledge of Christ and are shining as lights for Him in dark places, labourers in His harvest, please pray for those around you who you know are struggling, and also pray that you will continue to go from strength to strength. Pray the prayers from [Eph 1:17-23](#) and [Eph 3:16-21](#).

Amen!