

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX THE WORKER'S GROWTH

IN the springtime, we have watched the new life of the tree manifesting itself in the buds and blossoms it has put forth, and as we have done so, we have been reminded of the power within the tree. We have noticed sometimes a few of the old leaves remaining, but the power of the fresh life has soon thrown them off. And we have also noticed those who have had evil habits - like old leaves clinging to them, but who, by the power of the new life begotten in them, have thrown off these evil habits, and the leaves of a simple confession of Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit have been seen instead. There are five thoughts suggested by the subject of growth in the Divine life.

1. Growth implies life.
2. Growth implies progress.
3. The things in which we are to grow.
4. How to grow.
5. What we are to grow like.

I - Growth implies life.

A friend, preaching in the open air in Scotland, upon the subject of grace, was accosted after he had done by a man who said that his minister had been preaching upon that subject, and that he was trying to grow into grace. The evangelist pointed to a tree by the roadside, and asked him if the tree grew into that place, or if it was planted there, and then grew where it was planted?

“Why, of course, it was first planted in the place, and then grew where it was planted.”

“And so,” said the evangelist, “you must first be planted in grace before you can grow in grace. There is no such thing as working for grace and life, or growing into grace; but being saved by grace, we are to grow in grace.”

We who are believers in Christ, rejoice in three blessed facts:

1. That we are saved by grace. It was not anything we were, had done, could do, or promised to do; it was wholly and entirely of God's free unmerited favour that He saved us.

2. That we are now brought into a new standing. We no longer stand upon our own dignity, or in the old Adam, but our standing is in Christ; it is no longer a question of what we are, but of what He is, and what He has done for us.

3. That we are born again. That is, we have a new life, a new principle, a new nature.

We find that now there is a principle within us which is opposed to the flesh, or the evil principle we have naturally, and which, up to the time we were born again, we followed.

We have an illustration of this in the case of Ishmael and Isaac. Until Isaac; was born, Ishmael had it all his own way; but when Isaac was weaned, Ishmael was found mocking Isaac (Genesis 21:8, 9), and because of this Ishmael was cast out. The apostle takes up this as an illustration of the two natures: **“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now”** (Galatians 4:28, 29).

There are many Christians who say, “Why, I never had this conflict before I was born again. Now it is a continual conflict, and not only that, but I find that this evil nature or principle within me, is stronger than the new nature or principle; in fact, my experience is described in the words of Paul, **‘For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do’**” (Romans 7:19)

We know this is often the experience of Christians; but it is not proper Christian experience.

The man in the seventh of Romans mentions himself forty-one times (see the pronouns **“I,” “me,”** and **“my”**), and the Lord Jesus only once: no wonder he got into bondage. Afterwards, in the eighth of Romans, he sees the One who is to give him the power, namely, the Holy Spirit, who is to enable him to follow the desires of the new nature. Many Christians, when they wake up to this fact - that by the power of the Holy Spirit, they may have continual victory over the flesh - say they have got the second blessing.

As to point of experience, it may be so; but as to actual fact, it was theirs as soon as they believed; and it was through ignorance and unbelief that they did not live in the power of the Holy Spirit. We remember hearing of a quaint old man saying once, “Praise the Lord! when He saved me He made a clean job of it;” and that is so; and what we want to do, is to live in the power of it, by faith.

Recently, passing by a shop that was shut up, we noticed a placard stating, that “in a few days it would be re-opened under entirely new management.” It is for us to remember, that when we believed in Christ, we came under entirely new management, that is, under the management of the Holy Spirit.

And remember this also, that the evil principle within, is not cast out (cast out as to its power, but not as to its presence); for although Ishmael was cast out of the house, he was still in the land, and the seed of Ishmael was ever a source of annoyance to the seed of Isaac (Psalm 83:5, 6).

What we have to do, is to follow the new nature and not the old:

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [new nature] the things of the Spirit [new nature]. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit [new nature], if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:5-9)

II - Growth implies progress.

We read in Genesis 2:9, that God made every tree to grow; and we know that God’s purpose in saving us by His grace, is that we should grow in grace. We have four illustrations of growth or progress in the New Testament-

1. The corn;
2. The plant;
3. The child;
4. The building.

1. The corn. **“The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear”** (Mark 4:26-28).

And in springtime we have repeatedly seen this. As in nature, so in grace; there is the seed of the new life implanted by the Word and Spirit, then the blade of confession of Christ and love to the brethren, then the stalk of upright conduct, then the ear of fruit-bearing, and the full corn in the ear of usefulness, communion, and joy.

2. Plant growth.

There are four things necessary for a plant to grow.

First, it must have a good soil; and we must be **“rooted and grounded in love”** if we are to grow in grace (Ephesians 3:17).

Second, a plant must be in a good atmosphere; and if we are to grow, we must be separate from the world, and be meditating in the Word of God, and then we shall be **“like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season”** (Psalm 1:3).

Third, a plant must have sun, or else it will be sickly; and we must be not only **“rooted,”** but **“built up”** in Christ (Colossians 2:7), **“grow up into Him in all things”** (Ephesians 4:15).

Fourth, a plant must have water; and we must have Him of whom water is an emblem, namely, the Holy Spirit, for it is only as we feed on the Word by the power of the Spirit, that we grow in grace.

3. Child growth.

There are four stages given us in the Word:

Babes: those who are born into God's family; and as such, they need **“the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby”** (I Peter 2:2).

There are two things a mother wants for her baby, and these are, sleep and food; and there are two things a babe in Christ wants - rest of conscience through faith in the perfect sacrifice of Christ, and to be feeding continually upon the sincere milk of the Word.

Children: those who not only know that they are born into the family, but who are rejoicing in the blessings Christ gives, and whose sins are forgiven for His name's sake (I John 2:12).

Young Men: those in whom the Word of God is abiding, and who have victory thereby, over the wicked one (I John 2:13).

Fathers: those who have personal dealings with Christ, who not only rejoice in the blessings He gives, but who rejoice in the person of Christ, and have fellowship with Him. Here we see progress.

4. Building growth (Ephesians 2:21).

We have watched a house being built: we have seen the foundation laid, and then, brick by brick, or stone by stone, the building has gone on until it is finished. Peter seems to have this idea when speaking of adding to our faith, virtue or courage, knowledge, temperance or self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (II Peter 1:5-8).

In fact, we might call this the progress of faith, for-

- What is virtue or courage, but faith undaunted?
- What is knowledge, but faith apprehending?
- What is temperance, but faith overcoming?
- What is patience, but faith untiring?
- What is godliness, but faith imitating?
- What is brotherly kindness, but faith in practice?
- What is love, but faith at work?

Thus, **“if these things be in us, and abound, they make us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

III - *The things in which we are to grow.*

I. In grace. It is not “grow in graces,” although as we shall see, we are to grow in them, but in grace.

We love to think that it is ever Christ Himself, who is presented to us in the Word, not a set of doctrines only, or a mere system of theology, but a living Person, and we are to be growing up in Him. There are three points we would notice: first, The downward growth in the Word; second, The upward growth in Christ; and third, The outward growth in blessing to others.

First, *The downward growth in the Word.*

When in Galloway some years since, during a terrific storm, in which thousands and thousands of fir-trees were blown down, we particularly noticed one plantation, because not a single fir-tree was left standing, but here and there we noticed a beech-tree. What was the real cause of this? The fir-tree shoots its roots along the surface of the ground, while the beech-tree shoots its roots downward.

In the parable of the sower, the Master tells us that those hearers who are compared to the stony ground, have no root in themselves; they hear and receive the Word with joy, but in the time of temptation fall away. Alas! alas! again and again have we seen this; many who received the Word with joy, and seemed to have been truly born again, have in the time of temptation fallen away; like Simon Magus, they have made profession, but there has been no real evidence of the Spirit working in their lives. The new life is not merely hearing the Word, and saying "Hallelujah!"

What it is, we see in the different accounts of the parable of the sower: in Matthew, it is hearing and understanding the Word; in Mark, hearing and receiving the Word; in Luke, hearing, and keeping, and doing the Word. Notice these four steps:

Hearing and understanding the Word.

- Understand what it says about ourselves, the utter worthlessness, badness and helplessness of the flesh, so that we may abhor it, and put no confidence in it;
- Understand the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ to satisfy the claims of God, and to give perfect rest to our conscience;
- Understand the all-satisfying glories of Christ, to fully satisfy our hearts; understanding the purpose of God in saving us, that it was that we should be "**holy and without blame before Him in love;**"
- Understand the almightiness, the all-sufficiency of Christ, that we might fully trust Him.
- Receive it as food, that we may be strengthened;
- Receive it joyfully, that we may be gladdened;
- Receive it wholly, that we may judge our walk, thoughts, and actions; yea, our whole life by it.

Hearing and receiving the Word.

- Receiving it honestly, that we may bring forth fruit;
- receiving it in simplicity, that we may be blessed;

Hearing and keeping the Word.

- Keeping it as a treasure, securely; as a light, carefully; as water, to cleanse; as food, to support; as a fire, to warm; as a sword, to kill every evil thing; as honey, to sweeten.
- Keeping the Word, and yet being kept by it; in a word, hiding it in our heart, that we sin not against our heavenly Father.

Hearing and doing the Word.

- Doing it cheerfully, as obedient children;
- Doing it lovingly, as saved sinners;
- Doing it wisely, as skilled ambassadors;
- Doing it constantly, as true witnesses;
- Doing it thoroughly, as faithful servants;
- Doing it carefully, as good stewards;
- Doing it always, at all times, and under all circumstances, thus shall we be growing downward, rooted and grounded in Him, stablished in the faith.

Second. *The upward growth in Christ.*

As illustrating the truth of growing up in Christ, we will take the two names, “**Christ Jesus,**” as we find them in the 3rd and 4th of Philippians, remembering that they never occur together in the Gospels, and are peculiar to Paul’s Epistles, thus reminding us, that it is with an exalted, living, anointed Saviour, we have to do.

Growing in our boasting in Him. “**We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh**” (Philippians 3:3) The word “rejoice” means “*glory.*” We dare not glory or boast in ourselves, or our attainments, for we know that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing; even as Fletcher of Madeley once said in writing to a friend, “I compare myself to Lazarus, with this difference, Lazarus’ sores were all outside, but mine are all inside.”

If there is anything good or Christ-like manifested in our life, it is not us, but the grace of God that is the cause of it. And how is it that we are thus enabled to boast or rejoice in the Lord?

The whole secret is in the above verse. We find there, that we are separated to the Lord - cut off from the world - and with Paul we say, “**Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.**”

We find, too, that we are enabled to worship God by the Spirit, not needing earthly or outside help.

And also, as a consequence, on the one hand, we dare not trust or put any confidence in the flesh; and, on the other hand, we are entitled only to glory, to boast in the Lord, not in one another, not in our own gifts, not in our attainments, nor in anything of man.

Like the Psalmist, we make our boast in the Lord, and we grow in our boastings, in, of, and for Him.

Growing in our knowledge of Him. **“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”** (Philippians 3:8).

What marvels His grace has done for us! Think of His:

- Electing grace,
- Seeking grace,
- Finding grace,
- Pardoning grace,
- Justifying grace,
- Keeping grace,
- Preserving grace,
- Helping grace,
- Sustaining grace,
- Bearing grace,
- Uniting grace.

Think of what He has done, is doing, and will yet do. Think of the blessings He has given, is giving, and has yet promised to give; but let your eye look higher still - look not only to the blessings, but to the Blesser. When Ruth lay at the feet of Boaz, she got six measures of corn: that certainly was more than she got when gleaning - in the field, although then she had the **“handfuls of purpose;”** but when she was married to Boaz, then all the corn in his granaries belonged to her, because she belonged to him.

But think you, that she was thinking of her riches? No; her one object and thought, was Boaz himself. And do not let us be taken up with the blessings that we have in Christ, but rather let us be taken up with Him, who purchased them at such a cost - the shedding of His life's blood. Oh, to know Him; His sufferings for us; His love to us; His power to keep us!

To know Him as our Strength:

- To uphold us; as our Peace
- To rule us; as our Joy
- To fill us!

To know Him

- In all the sufferings of His death;
- In all the power of His resurrection;
- In all the glory of His Person;
- In all the all-sufficiency of the offices and relationships He holds, to, and for us; in all the plenitude of His grace and the love of His heart.

Growing in our apprehension of Him. “**if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus**” (Philippians).

There are two thoughts here:

First, a fact stated - “**I was apprehended by Christ Jesus;**” and second, Paul’s desire to know the reason why; and it is very helpful to notice, that God’s purpose in whatever truth we take up, is, that we should be holy.

- If we look at the death of Christ, we find that He died that we should live to Him.
- If we look at the resurrection of Christ, it is that we may know its power, and walk in newness of life.
- If we look at the blood of Christ, we find that the same blood, which is the basis of everything, has also separated us to God from the world.
- If we look at the Cross of Christ, we find we are also to take up our Cross and follow Him.
- If we look at the sufferings of Christ, we are also to suffer for, and with Him.
- If we look at the exaltation of Christ, it is that we should be taken up with, and look to Him.
- If we look at God’s predestinating us, it is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son.
- If we look at God’s electing grace, it is that we should be holy.

We rejoice that we have peace with God.

Do not let us stop there, but go on to enjoy the peace of God, and we shall enjoy it, as we are careful for nothing, prayerful in everything, and thankful for anything.

- We rejoice that we are saved; then let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.
- We rejoice that we have been called with a high and holy calling; then let us walk worthy of it.
- We rejoice that we are kept by the power of God; then let us keep ourselves from idols, and in the love of God.
- We rejoice that we have eternal life; then let us lay hold on eternal life.
- We rejoice that the Holy Spirit lives in us; then let us live in the Spirit.
- We rejoice because of our union in and with Christ; then let the life of Christ be seen in our life.
- We rejoice that we are made nigh by the blood; then let us continually draw near to God.
- We rejoice that we are accepted in the Beloved; then let us labour to be acceptable, or well-pleasing to Him, as servants.
- We rejoice that we shall not come into judgment; then let us continually judge ourselves by the Word of God.
- We rejoice that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin; then let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.
- We rejoice that the Father loves us as much as He loves His Son; then let us love Him with all our heart.

Oh that we, indeed, knowing Christ has laid hold of us, may lay hold of Him; lay hold of His wisdom, power, and love; in a word-Himself!

Growing in Him and seeing His calling. **“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 3:14).

In Ephesians we read of **“the hope of His calling”** (1:18), and **“the hope of our calling”** (4:4). The hope of His calling is the joy of Christ’s own heart, in our sharing His own glory with Him.

We are too apt to be taken up with our thoughts of Christ, instead of His thoughts to and of us.

He will never be satisfied till we are with Him; and we shall never be satisfied till we awake in His likeness, and this latter is the **“hope of our calling.”** But the thought in Philippians 3:14, is this: Paul wanted not only to know Christ’s delight in him, but he also wanted to delight in Christ, that when He returned he might hear the Master’s **“Well done, good and faithful servant,”** and thus be well-pleasing to Him as a servant, which we must all acknowledge is the highest goal we can, or want to reach.

Growing in Him and seeing His keeping power. **“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:6-7)

“Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.”

Many Christians make a great mistake, in relation to growth in grace. Instead of trusting the Lord, they are worrying and looking to themselves, to see if they are growing. There will be no progress all the while they are doing that.

A boy does not try to grow - he eats, sleeps, works, and takes exercise; all the while he is growing, and ministering to his growth by so doing, although he himself is unconscious of it.

If we would have a knowledge of Christ’s keeping power, there must be on our part, a perfect trust in His perfect keeping power, and as a natural consequence, we shall enjoy perfect peace.

As an old man once said, **“I do the trusting, and He does the keeping.”**

A little servant girl was one day asked by a lady, whether she knew Christ as her Saviour, and she said **“Yes.”**

The lady then went on to tell her, it was her privilege to take all her troubles and trials to Christ, and she replied, **“I do so; and more than that, I leave them with Him, when I do take them.”**

We, instead of doing this, are too apt to be like the man, who was walking along a country road carrying a heavy pack upon his back, when a horse and cart came along, and he asked the driver for a lift, but, when the man got up into the cart, he did not take his pack off his back, but continued to carry it.

Presently the driver said, "My friend, won't you put your pack down into the cart?"

"No, thank you," said the man, "you have been so kind as to give me a lift, I will not trouble you with my pack."

We smile at the foolish man, but are we not very often like him?

We carry a pack of doubts and fears, a pack of trouble and care, when all the time the Lord is saying, "Roll your burden on Me; roll yourself on Me; roll your way on Me; roll your works on Me."

Oh that we may commit ourselves unreservedly into the hands of the Lord! like the Scotch laddie, who, when he was asked if he had a soul, said "No."

"What do you mean?" said the minister; and he began to speak against infidel notions, thinking the lad was an infidel, when the laddie said-

"I did have a soul till the other day, but I gave it to the Lord Jesus, and now He has got it."

Growing in Him and having all supplied. "**But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus**" (Philippians 4:19) .

God does not promise to give us all we want, but He does promise to supply all our need.

If a child wants a knife, the parent does not give it, because the child would cut itself; and sometimes we ask the Lord for knives, and He does not give them to us, because we should do ourselves harm.

He will supply all our temporal need, and also all our spiritual need; and notice, the measure or standard of blessing, is not according to our need, or asking, but "**according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**"

Growing in Him, and suing our standing in Him, and our relationship one to another. "**Salute every saint in Christ Jesus**" (Philippians 4:21).

God already sees us in Heaven, in the person of His Son; but there is another side we are apt to forget, and that is, that all believers in Christ have the same standing, and we should recognize, not only our oneness in Him, but also our oneness with each other, and act accordingly. What bickering and jealousy, believers would be saved from, if they recognized that the success or failure of others was their own, for we are members one of another. Thus the success of one is the success of all, and vice versa.

Third. *Outward growth in blessing to others.*

If we look up the following Scriptures in connection with the word "**abounding,**" we shall see how we may grow outwardly, in blessing to others:

- Abounding in fruit-bearing (Philippians 4:17), that others may see the evidence of life in us.
- Abounding in love (Philippians 1:9), that others may see the truth of the Master's words, "**By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye love one another.**"
- Abounding in contentment (Philippians 4:12, 18), that others may see the spirit of the Master, manifested by us.
- Abounding in thanksgiving (Colossians 2:7), that others may glorify God on our behalf, as they see His grace in us.
- Abounding in ministering to the need of others (II Corinthians 8:7, 8), that others may see that we love, not only in word but in deed.
- Abounding in suffering for, and with Christ (II Corinthians 1:5), that others may see the patience and love of Christ, manifested by us.
- Abounding in work for, and with Christ (I Corinthians 15:58), that others may be blessed.

It is to the last we confine ourselves here. "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord;**" and in this verse we briefly notice seven things.

First. A Plea for steadfastness. Do we not find the plea, the reason for steadfastness, as expressed in the word "**therefore**," for it brings before us the truths enumerated in I Corinthians 15, for in it we see the death of Christ, His resurrection, His glorious victory over death, His coming glory which we shall share with Him, the first fruits which He has become, and the certainty that we shall triumph over all our foes.

As we see these things we shall be:

- Steadfast in our adherence to Christ (Ruth 1:18);
- Steadfast in our hearts' allegiance to Him (I Corinthians 7:37);
- Steadfast in holding fast our confidence in Him (Hebrews 3:14);
- Steadfast in looking for Him (Acts 1:10);
- Steadfast in looking to Him (Acts 7:55);
- Steadfast in our faith in Him (Colossians 2:5);
- Steadfast in our resistance of Satan with the Word (I Peter 5:9);
- Steadfast in growing in grace (II Peter 3:17); and
- Steadfast in our work for Christ (I Corinthians 15:58).

Second. A firm stand - "**unmovable.**" Standing on resurrection ground, keeping our position, because we are kept by the power of God through faith.

Third. A persevering effort - "**always abounding.**" Not working by fits and starts, but in prayerful, believing, loving, and persevering effort, and also abounding therein.

Fourth. An important reminder - "**in the work of the Lord.**" We are to see that our work is in the Lord, for the Lord; and with the Lord; not for the glory of self, or to bring honour to any party.

Fifth. A blessed assurance - “**forasmuch as ye know,**” &c. Whatever we do for Him does not escape His notice, and although it is only a cup of cold water, it will not lose its reward.

Sixth. An encouragement - “**labour.**” Not play, but hard work, and yet easy, because it is with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Seventh. A sure reward - “**not in vain.**” Working for Christ on such lines, in such a manner, and with such ends, it can never miss its reward.

Thus seeking to be used by the Lord in blessing to others, we ourselves shall be growing in grace, and become more Christ-like, for it is said of Him that “**He went about doing good.**”

2. Grow in knowledge. Mere head knowledge puffs up, but holding the truth in love builds up; and if we remember, that the object of all true knowledge is that we become more Christ-like, the more knowledge the better.

- Growing in the knowledge of God, as we walk worthy of the Lord, we shall be fruitful in every good work (Colossians 1:10).
- Growing in the knowledge of Christ, we shall become like Him in fellowship with Him (Matthew 11:29).
- Growing in the knowledge of His will, by doing it (Colossians 1:9), we shall be initiated into His secrets.
- Growing in the knowledge of His love, in communion with Him (Ephesians 3:19), we shall be satisfied in Him.
- Growing in the knowledge of His power, by trusting Him (Philippians 3:10), we shall be equipped for all that comes.
- Growing in the knowledge of His glory, by looking to Him (II Corinthians 4:6), we shall live in the power of the world to come.
- Growing in the knowledge of His purpose, as we are taught by the Spirit through the Word (John 16:13), we shall know His mind, and have fellowship with Him in consequence.

3. Grow in love. In I Corinthians 13, we have what the character of true love is, and what it does.

- let our love grow in firmness - “**rooted and grounded in love**”;
- let it grow in extent “**abounding in love**”;
- let it grow in intensity, constrained by the love of Christ;
- let it grow practically - “**love not in word, but in deed and in truth.**”

4. Grow in humility.

Notice Paul’s growth in humility: at first we find him saying, “**I am the least of the apostles**” (I Corinthians 15:9); then, five years afterwards, I “**am less than the least of all saints**” (Ephesians 3:8); and just before he finished his course, I “**am the chief of sinners**” (I Timothy 1:15). Yea, lower than this was he, for in writing to the Corinthians he said, “**Though I be nothing**” (II Corinthians 12:11).

Let us remember, that while we seek to grow in humility, we must never be proud of it. Those who are most humble, are most unconscious of it themselves.

5. Grow in faith (II Thessalonians 1:3).

- let our faith grow in passiveness, by resting only in the Lord;
- let our faith grow in firmness, by believing all the Word of God;
- let our faith grow in dependence, by trusting everything to the Lord;
- let our faith grow in constancy, by always looking to Him;
- let our faith grow in simplicity, by receiving everything from Him;
- let our faith grow in activity, that others may be blessed;
- let our faith grow in extent - never be satisfied, go on from faith to faith, from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from peace to peace, from joy to joy, from glory to glory, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

IV - How to grow.

If a gardener wishes his standard rose trees to grow, there are two things he must do.

First, he must keep down, or rather cut off, the suckers of the brier, and in the next place, he must cultivate the rose. And so with us.

The answer to the question, "How am I to grow?" is, "Keep down the old nature; put off the old man with his deeds; and minister to, and cultivate the new nature;" or rather, as the Holy Spirit puts it, "**Laying aside All malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby**" (I Peter 2:1, 2).

There are three things essential to growth, viz.:- liberty, food, and exercise - and these three things we have illustrated in the three persons whom Christ raised from the dead.

1. Liberty.

When Lazarus came forth from the grave at the Lord's command, we read that he was "**bound hand and foot,**" and a napkin was over his face; he had life, but not liberty. There are many Christians in the same condition spiritually; they have life, but not liberty.

- Their hands are bound by indolence or fear, for they seldom do any work for Christ;
- Their feet are bound by worldliness and self-will; they are not running the way of the Lord's commandments; and
- There is the napkin of doubt, and a conscience burdened by failure and backsliding, which obscures their vision of the Lord.

This ought not to be; it is our privilege to stand and rejoice in the liberty wherewith the Lord has made us free, and not be entangled in the bondage of law, self, or the world.

2. Food.

After Christ had raised the ruler's daughter from the dead, the first thing that He said was, "**Give her something to eat.**"

We who are brought from death unto life, can praise God for His great love wherewith He hath loved us, that He has quickened us together with Christ: but do not let us forget, that the Divine life within us, needs to be ministered unto, and sustained, just as much as the natural life, and the food for the believer in Christ, is nothing more, and nothing less, than the Word of God, which is milk to nourish, food to strengthen, and meat to build up.

3. Exercise.

After Christ had raised the widow's son, He gave him back to his mother. Evidently, this only son had been the support of his mother, up to his death, so that when he died, she lost her earthly supporter, and Christ's object in delivering him back to his mother, was, that he should still be her stay and help.

Here we get the thought of exercise; and if we would grow in grace, there must be exercise.

- Exercising ourselves to have "**a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men**" (Acts 24:16).
- Exercising ourselves in godliness (I Timothy 4:7).
- Our senses exercised, that we may discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

Do not mistake us; we do not mean by exercise, a painful struggling to do work for Christ, but we mean being right in our own souls before God, down at the Master's feet, where He can take us up and use us; as one has said, "I used to work for Christ with one hand, and hold Him with the other: but now I let Christ hold me, and I work with both hands."

We should be so filled with the love of Christ, that we cannot keep it to ourselves; and so filled with the Spirit, that out of us shall flow rivers of living water.

V - What we are to grow like.

1. Grow like the almond tree for wakefulness.

The almond blossoms are the earliest of any fruit trees. "From the circumstance of its blossoming the earliest of any of the fruit trees, and before it is in leaf, it has its name, from a verb, signifying *to make haste, to be in a hurry, to watch or to awake early.*"

If we would grow like the almond tree, we must be fully awake to our privilege and responsibility to live and shine for Christ, and be on the look out for Him, and so be ready for Him when He comes.

2. Grow like the corn for bountifulness.

If a corn of wheat remains unplanted, it abides alone; but if it is planted, it dies, and brings forth much fruit. We have received much from the Lord; let us therefore be bountiful in our praise to Him in telling Him out to others, and in ministering to the wants of poorer saints, as we have means and opportunity.

3. Grow like the ivy for tenacity.

The ivy is a parasite, it lives on another; we have often seen it clinging round a tree, striking its roots into the bark, and living upon it. We are parasites in a spiritual sense, we live not by ourselves, but by Christ; yea, it is Christ that liveth in us. And as the ivy, by the power of the life that is in it, is enabled to cling to the tree; so we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, should cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart (Acts 11:23).

4. Grow like the vine for fruitfulness.

Christ has ordained us, that we should bring forth fruit, more fruit, much fruit, yea, that our fruit should remain. We once brought forth fruit unto death; but now we are to bring forth fruit unto holiness; to be filled with the fruits of righteousness; to be fruitful in every good work; and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, or rather let Him bring it forth in us.

5. Grow like the oak for stability.

We are not to be like Reuben, “**unstable as water.**” We shall not “excel” if we are. Firmly rooted in Christ, in love, and in the Word, not carried about by every wind of doctrine, we shall be established in grace and in the truth.

6. Grow like the olive for richness.

Rich in faith, giving glory to God; and rich in good works, that others may see the power of His grace in, and with us.

7. Grow like the lily for purity.

“**Keep thyself pure,**” is a most practical injunction. May we keep our mind pure; bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The most practical definition of holiness that we know, is found in the words of Paul:- “**Cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.**”

May we keep our motive, in work for Christ, pure, constrained by nought but the mighty propelling and compelling love of Christ! May we keep our object in work pure, the glory of God alone, not the honour and the applause of men!

In a word, let us keep ourselves, because we are kept by the power of God, our whole spirit, soul and body, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus.

Remember, our bodies are purchased by the blood of Christ, are members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

8. Grow like the palm for uprightness.

We read, that Noah was “**perfect**,” or, as the margin says, “*upright*” (Genesis 6:9). Again, God said to Abraham, “**Walk before Me, and be thou perfect**,” or, as in the margin, “*upright*” (Genesis 17:1).

Again, the word “**perfect**,” in the New Testament, in some cases, means “*full-grown*” (Philippians 3:15).

And what will be the result - Godward, manward, and in our own experience, as we walk, work, and worship uprightly before the Lord?

We have that given us in the book of Proverbs; we refer very briefly to a few passages.

- The Lord is a Buckler to us (2:7);
- We have a sure dwelling-place (2:21);
- We are strengthened by walking in the way of the Lord (10:29);
- We shall be guided (11:3);
- We shall have deliverance (11:6);
- We shall be a blessing to others (11:11);
- The Lord is pleased with us (11:20);
- We shall deliver others (12:6);
- We shall be kept (13:6);
- We shall have prosperity (15:11);
- The Lord will delight to answer our prayers (15:8);
- We shall have discernment to walk aright (15:21);
- Our aim will be separation from all evil (16:17);
- We shall be on the winning side (21:18);
- We shall carefully consider (margin) our way (21:29);
- We shall be a contrast to the wicked (28:10); and
- We shall hated by the world (29:27).

~ end of chapter 26 ~

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