



The Last Word from Peter 2 Peter 3:18

TO: LEGISLATORS', STAFF & LOBBYISTS

FROM: DAN MADISON

DATE: Week of May 11th, 2009

The last words of people are important and often show a disdain and/or lack of knowledge of eternity. Consider the following "last words:"

To himself everyone is immortal;
he may know that he is going to die,
but he can never know that he is dead.

Samuel Butler

When you're dead, you're dead. That's it.

Marlene Dietrich

How sad are these perspectives when one realizes that biblically they are dead wrong! As we have learned during this study, eternity affects all men! None are exempt. "The last words of Peter" are far more pointed and realistic, as he encourages his readers to pursue a life of Christlikeness and spiritual growth; a goal that every believer should have.

I. INTRODUCTION

'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' 2 Peter 3:18a

These are the last words of an old man, written down as his legacy to us. He was himself a striking example of his own teachings. It took a lifetime for Simon, the son of Jonas, to grow into Peter; but it was done, and the very faults of his character became strength. What he had proved possible in his own case, he commands and commends to us! He is like some trumpeter on the battlefield who spends his last breath in sounding the advance. Immortal hope animates his dying injunction: 'Grow! Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior¹.

We will use this idea of 'growth' as a starting point of our study. Unfortunately, this duty of growth in

Christian Character is an often neglected duty.

II. THE DIRECTION OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

Notice that the direction of spiritual progress is twofold but the process is one. We see 'grace' and 'knowledge' as the **direction** but Jesus Christ and a closer relationship with Him as the one **process** (the goal). He is the object of knowledge, and He is the giver and the Author of grace. As believers, we are to move on (progress) to spiritual maturity. Paul gave similar instructions to the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:14-16)

Grow (*auxano*) means "to advance, or increase in the sphere of." The idea here is to grow in **grace** through the **knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. This is a command that calls for the believer to be continually passionate in his/her pursuit of spiritual progress. Peter is calling for spiritual growth to be the believers' lifestyle. This reminds us of his charge in 2 Peter 1:8.

III. THE OBLIGATION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

It is important to notice what Peter is **not saying**. He is not saying, "Grow in devotion," or, "Grow in zeal," or "Grow in holiness." He closes by saying, "Grow in grace" increasing our knowledge of Him.² The word 'grow' is a command. It is not an option. The word itself indicates that we are to **keep on growing**.

^{NKJ} 1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Desire (*epipotheō*) *intensely crave* possession (lawfully or wrongfully):— (earnestly) desire (greatly), (greatly) long (after), lust³. As believers we are to 'desire' the Word. That is the key to Christian growth, and is an obligation

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for each and every believer!

IV. THE METHOD OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The exhortation to ‘grow in grace’ implies that you have grace. That is **the starting point**; a saving relationship with Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). In order to grow, one must have life. Without life, there can be no growth. The heart of the unregenerate man is compared to a stone. Stones do not grow; they have no vitality. Salvation in Jesus Christ gives us a new heart; one that can grow. (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17)

*Christian growth is possible only when
The life of Christ has first been implanted
In our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit,
According to the sovereign power and the will of God.*

Query: What does it mean to grow in grace?

If you are a Christian, you ought to be continually realizing a deeper and more blessed consciousness of Christ’s love and blessings. Growth in grace comes by faith. We trust God. We increasingly depend on Him. We are willing to take the risk of dependence. We are ready to forsake pride and independence and accept God’s amazing and generous gifts. **But...**this does not come by osmosis. There is effort and method in our growth cycle. Just as a tree starts from a seed and needs water, sun, air and soil to flourish, there are also needed essentials for the believer to grow. Consider:

We will advance (grow) when our eyes are focused on Jesus Christ ‘the author and perfecter of our faith’ (Hebrews 12:2). We will see:

- His divinity (Col. 1:19; 2:9)
- His saving and sustaining grace (Eph. 1:6-8a)
- His example (John 13:15; 34-35)

One of the major prerequisites for growth is exercise. The blacksmith’s muscles are strengthened by wielding the forge-hammer. Unused, the muscles atrophy. So it is with the Christian walk. We need to exercise our God given responsibilities. Here are a few:

- Prayer—pray constantly and fervently to be led by the influence of the Holy Spirit in your daily living. (Matt. 7:7; Phil. 4:6; Romans 8:26)
- Study the Scriptures—be much in the perusal of the Word of God. Strive to learn; to contemplate the truth of God’s Word and apply it to daily living. (2 Tim. 2:15)
- Self Examination—take more time for praying to ‘the Father which is in secret’ and looking into the state of your soul. (Matt. 6:6; 2 Peter 1:10)
- Application of what we learn—Putting feet to your words in the areas of:
 1. Love to God and others.
 2. Joy in believing.
 3. Patience towards others
 4. Increased humility
 5. Zeal in advancing the Word and will of God.
 6. Conscience—perception to discern the criminality of even little sins⁴.

In Galatians 5:22-23 we read of the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ and in the section before us, Peter tells us to ‘grow in grace.’ Consider the fact that **‘fruit is grace.’** Faith is grace; penitence is grace; love is grace and so are patience, humility, and zeal—so that when we are called to grow in grace, we are not restricted to any particular disposition—but enjoined to practice them all⁵.

At this point, I would be remiss if I did not mention one other “method.” A tree requires pruning if it is to grow, flourish and bear fruit. In the same way God uses the pruning process in our lives to refine and strengthen us as we travel our pilgrim path (John 15:1-2; James 1:2-5). This pruning is for our good and His glory.

V. THE ALTERNATIVE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

NKJ 2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

As we saw last time, a failure to grow will result in a falling away from your own steadfastness. “Grow in Grace and knowledge...” is the only preventive medicine available to the believer. To grow or not to grow **is not**



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the question. The question is growth or apostasy. The Christian walk is like learning to ride a bicycle. You are either moving forward or you are falling off.

Since growth is the law of life, what strong proof can you have of life without growth? None! Growth is both our duty and our privilege.

Remember—dead things do not grow. You cannot grow unless you are alive, and you are not alive unless you have Jesus Christ.

VI. CONCLUSION

^{NKJ} 2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Peter closes the epistle by giving glory to **To Him** which specifically addresses this ‘doxology’⁶ to “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The **Him** is unquestionably Jesus Christ. To give Jesus Christ the glory due Him is to acknowledge that He is God. Why? Because the Old Testament quotes God as saying:

^{NKJ} Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

Christ is the beginning, the process and the fulfillment of our great salvation. He is ascribed eternal praise for He is God. This is the ultimate purpose for our existence—to glorify Jesus Christ. Everything else is designed to that end⁷.

The message of 2nd Peter is that the joy of hope is the power of godliness. The knowledge of God’s promises is the pathway of His power (1 Peter 1:3,4). The promises, the power, the hope and the godliness are all because of His grace. And so the book ends—and with these words we take our leave: “*To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity*”⁸. Amen.”

¹ MacLaren, Alexander, *Growth* http://preceptaustin.org/macLaren_2_peter.htm#g
² Courson, Jon: *Jon Courson's Application Commentary*. Nashville, TN : Thomas Nelson, 2003, S. 1600

³ Strong, James: *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996, S. H8674

⁴ James, John Angell, *Growth in Grace*, www.gracegems.org/22/growth

⁵ MacLaren, p4

⁶ Doxology—an expression of praise to God

⁷ http://www.preceptaustin.org/2_peter_317-18.htm#3:18

⁸ Piper, John, http://preceptaustin.org/2_peter_commentaries.htm